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Media Monitor

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The Honeymoon Is Over

TV News Coverage of the Bush Administration During 1989

How does TV news cover the Presidency? To find out we are analyzing all network evening news stories on the Bush administration. This issue of *Media Monitor* examines coverage of the adminstration's personnel and policies since Inauguration Day. From January 20 through November 30 we monitored 1809 stories on the Bush administration, including 574 on the President, that aired on the ABC, CBS, and NBC evening newscasts.

Media Monitor (Copyright 1989) is published ten times a year by the Center for Media and Public Affairs, a nonpartisan and nonprofit research organization. The Center conducts scientific studies of how the media treat social and political issues. Yearly corporate ($50.00) and individual ($25.00) subscriptions are available.

Editors:
Dr. S. Robert Lichter
Dr. Linda S. Lichter

Research Director:
Daniel Amundson

Project Director
Richard Noyes

Assistant Project Director
Tim McLaughlin

Production and Graphics
Scott Chronister
Mary Carroll Gunning

Public Affairs Director:
Toni Grueninger

Circulation Manager
Allison Schaengold

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Major findings:

■ **He's No Reagan** - George Bush has gotten less than one-third the TV coverage that Ronald Reagan received in 1981. Reagan personally received almost as much coverage as the entire Bush administration during a comparable time period. *Page 2*

■ **Millie Watch** - The President's dog Millie has been mentioned in more stories than three cabinet secretaries - Cavazos, Yeutter and Derwinski. *Page 3*

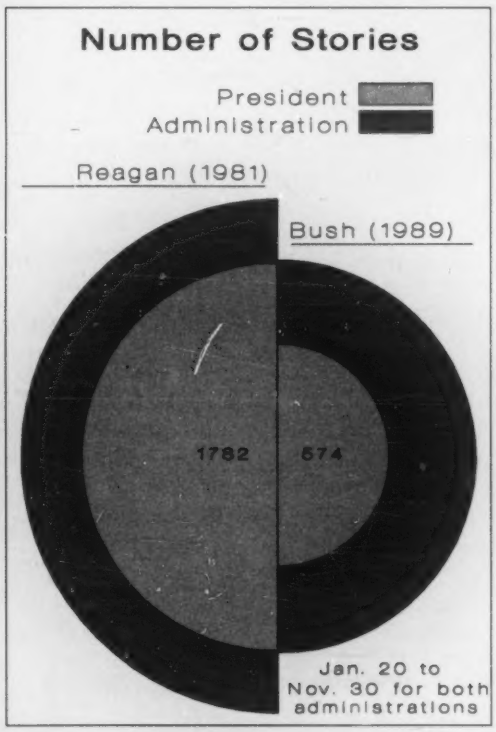
■ **I'm OK, You're Not** - Bush's personal good press outweighed his bad press during 1989. But the reverse was true for his administration. *Page 3*

■ **No News Is Bad News** - Bush's amount of TV coverage and his level of good press both dropped by one-third after July. Since August he has averaged only 1.4 news stories per night and 39% good press. *Page 4*

■ **Home Field Disadvantage** - Bush has gotten more coverage and higher marks on foreign policy and defense than on domestic issues. Evaluations of his foreign policy have been balanced, but evaluations of domestic policies were almost 2 to 1 negative. *Page 4*

Bush v. Reagan

From his inauguration through November 30, George Bush has been the focus of 574 stories on the ABC, CBS, and NBC evening news. That gives him less than one-third of the coverage received by Ronald Reagan (1782 stories) during the same period in 1981. (Reagan's figures are derived from the Vanderbilt University TV News Index.) The networks aired over 100 stories per month on Reagan



during 11 of his first 12 months in office. So far Bush has never attracted as many as 100 stories in any single month. Moreover, Bush's coverage has dropped sharply in recent months. From January through July he averaged a combined 2.1 stories per night on the three networks. Since August, his coverage has fallen to 1.4 stories a night - a drop of 33%.

So far, coverage of the entire Bush administration barely exceeds Ronald Reagan's personal coverage at this point in his first term. The networks have devoted 1809 stories to some aspect of the Bush administration, fewer than six per night. At this point in 1981, the Reagan administration had already generated 3100 stories, an average of nearly ten stories per night.

No longer the Yale yuppie with a silver spoon in his mouth, no longer the attack dog of the campaign. The new image - a guy who could live in your hometown.

-Lesley Stahl
CBS, 4/19

The Malta summit only underlined Bush's lower media profile. His meeting with Gorbachev generated 88 evening news stories, about half the number produced by last year's Reagan-Gorbachev Moscow summit (174 stories), and their 1987 Washington summit (168 stories).

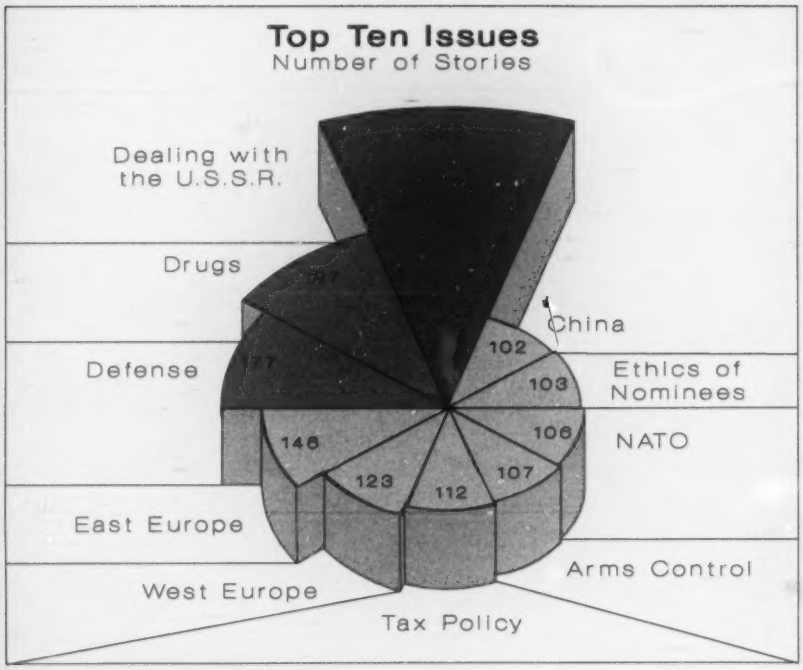
Newsmakers

We noted every story that mentioned the First Family or the President's major appointees, as well as the smaller number of stories for which each individual was a featured newsmaker. Despite his low media profile relative to his predecessor, George Bush stands head and shoulders above all other members of his administration with 2158 mentions. He has been mentioned in almost ten times as many stories as the next most newsworthy figure, Secretary of State James Baker (238). Next come Secretary of Defense Richard Cheney (114), Vice President Dan Quayle (98), Attorney General Richard Thornburgh (83), Drug "Czar" William Bennett (78), First Lady Barbara Bush (69), White House Press Secretary Marlin Fitzwater (68), and White House Chief of Staff John Sununu (67). The top ten list is rounded out by Secretary of Transportation Samuel Skinner (43). Yet even these high visibility "players" are rarely the focus of TV news stories. Apart from the President, only Baker (50), Quayle (45), Cheney (40), Barbara Bush (32), Drug Czar William Bennett (16) and HUD Secretary Jack Kemp (15) have shown up in ten or more stories as the featured newsmaker.

Newsmakers

		Stories Mentioned	Stories Featured
1.	George Bush	2158	574
2.	James Baker	238	50
3.	Richard Cheney	114	40
4.	Dan Quayle	98	45
5.	Richard Thornburgh	83	7
6.	William Bennett	78	16
7.	Barbara Bush	69	32
8.	Marlin Fitzwater	68	2
9.	John Sununu	67	6
10.	Samuel Skinner	43	0

Thereafter the list drops off quickly. The top twenty individuals mentioned include Kemp and National Security Advisor Brent Scowcroft (39 apiece), OMB Director Richard Darman (30), HHS Secretary Louis Sullivan (28), Treasury Secretary Nicholas Brady (23), Federal Reserve Board Chairman Alan Greenspan (19), Labor



Secretary Elizabeth Dole (15), Commerce Secretary Robert Mosbacher (14), Interior Secretary Manuel Lujan (13), and Energy Secretary James Watkins (10). Just missing the top twenty, despite the demands of motherhood, was the Bush's dog "Millie" (9). Millie had a higher media profile than three cabinet secretaries - Lauro Cavazos (Education), Clayton Yeutter (Agriculture), and Edwin Derwinski (Veterans Affairs). Still casting a long shadow over the administration is one-time Defense Secretary-designate John Tower. No one but the President has been featured in more stories than Tower (83); his 188 mentions place him third behind Baker.

You know these charismatic, macho, visionary types - they'll do anything.

-George Bush
(self-description)
NBC, 12/4

Rating Bush

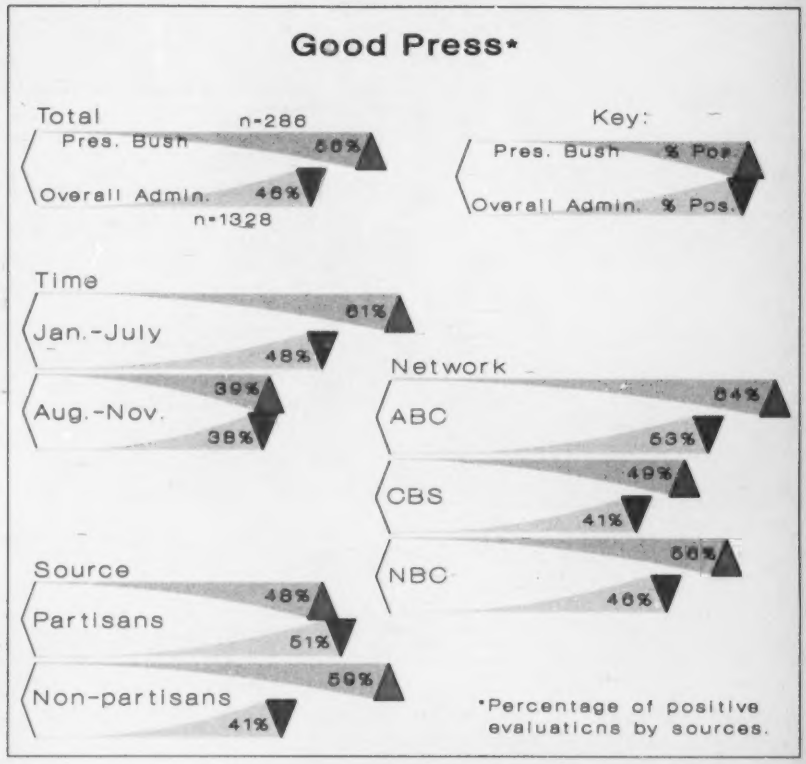
To gauge the Bush administration's level of good press, we recorded 1328 clearly positive or negative evaluations by all sources (including reporters). The President himself attracted 286 evaluations, an average of almost one per day. Sample positive evaluation of Bush, from a voter interviewed on CBS (4/30): "I'm starting to trust him more than I thought I would. He seems real nice. Yeah, I like him." Sample negative evaluation, from political scientist James David Barber (NBC, 4/28): "We've got to have leadership now. You can't give him points for paddling his canoe around in a lake when he's right next to Niagara Falls, right?" Measured in this way, Bush's good press has outweighed his bad press by 56% to 44%. His best marks have come on ABC (64% positive) and his worst on CBS (49%), with NBC in between (56%).

A bright note for Bush is that his best press comes from non-partisan sources (those not identified as Republicans or Democrats, such as pundits, reporters and ordinary citizens.) His level of good press among non-partisans is 59%, among partisans only 48%. A sour note is the downward trend in his assessments. During his first 100 days in office, his evaluations were 61% positive. The criticism stepped up during May and June, when bad press outweighed good press. But a burst of praise during his European trip made July his best month with 79% positive ratings, bringing his overall good press back up to 61%. Since then, negative assessments have predominated for four straight months, by as much as a 2 to 1 margin of bad press over good press in October. Since August 1, Bush's level of good press has been only 39%. Thus, the 3 to 2 positive ratings of his first six months have shifted to 3 to 2 negative for the rest of the year.

If the President's personal honeymoon with the media ended after his first 100 days in office, the networks' romance with the new administration never survived the wedding night. Overall, the Bush administration has received more criticism than praise - only 46% good press. For example, after the failed Panama coup, Dan Rather cited unnamed Presidential aides as saying, "the new White House team, led by John Sununu, made a lot of mistakes, thus creating an embarrassing situation for the President and the country." (CBS, 10/6) While Bush was racking up 78% positive ratings in January immediately after his inauguration, his administration's overall level of good press was only 46%. The administration's proprtion of good press never rose above its March peak of 56%, and sank as low as 33% in October. CBS was again most critical, giving the administration only a 41% positive rating. Even relatively friendly ABC offered only a slight majority (53%) of good press. Moreover, the administration's overall media ratings have fallen in recent months along with those of the

President himself. Bush and company combined for 48% positive evaluations through July but only 38% positive since August. Partisan commentary on the administration has been more favorable than non-partisan ratings (by 51% to 41%), just the reverse of Bush's personal profile.

The recent Malta summit gave only a modest boost to the Bush team's media image. The administration received only 12 evaluations connected to the summit, though two-thirds of them were positive. The Soviet delegation received precisely the same ratings.



Issues

Media coverage of the presidency is determined by policy issues as well as personalities. In this context George Bush's media portrait has been defined largely in terms of foreign affairs and defense. By far the heaviest coverage concerned the President's dealings with the Soviet Union (322 stories). The drug problem topped the domestic agenda (197), followed by defense issues (177), relations with Eastern and Western Europe (146 and 123), tax policy (112), nuclear arms control (107), NATO relations (106), ethics problems of administration nominees (103), and relations with China (102). Thus, apart from ethics stories, only one domestic social issue (drugs) and one economic issue (taxes) made the media's top ten list. A second tier of issues, which generated 50 to 100 stories apiece, included such high profile domestic concerns as the federal budget, crime, education, and the environment, but also a host of international problems, such as trade policies, Nicaragua, Panama, Israel, and the hostages in Lebanon. Some of the hottest political battles, like abortion, civil rights, and the minimum wage, failed to make the top twenty issues covered.

The issues that received the most coverage, however, were not always the issues on which the administration was frequently evaluated. 63% of all policy evaluations came on the home front, where criticism was also harshest. For example, Sen. Joseph Biden (D-DE) complained on NBC (9/8) that Bush's anti-drug program forces "the states to provide the biggest guns but not be given much or any ammunition by the federal government." Negative assessments outweighed positive ones on domestic issues by nearly 2 to 1 (64% to 36%), including a majority of bad press on every issue receiving ten or more evaluations. Among frequently evaluated issues, the coverage was relatively balanced on drug policy (47% positive) and the minimum wage fight (46%) but slipped to 39% positive on the environment, 31% on the savings and loan defaults, and 29% on the federal budget (including the deficit). The administration did better on foreign policy and defense issues, attaining a 50-50 balance of good and bad press. However, that left its combined policy evaluations at nearly 3 to 2 negative (41% good press). The highest marks went to the administration's arms control efforts (60% positive), its handling of Nicaragua (53%) and Panama (52%, with early praise for tough talk giving way to criticism for lack of action during the coup). Bad press predominated on its dealings with China (41% positive) and Eastern Europe (35%).

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Media Monitor

Volume IV, Number 1 January 1990

1989 - The Year in Review

TV's Leading News Topics, Reporters, and Political Jokes

During 1989 we monitored 14,400 news items broadcast on the ABC, CBS, and NBC evening news. We also logged all jokes about public affairs from monologues on NBC's "Tonight Show" and "Late Night with David Letterman," beginning with George Bush's inauguration on January 20. This annual review issue of *Media Monitor* chronicles the leading news topics and targets of political humor on television during 1989. We also catalogued the correspondents and anchors who reported every story that was broadcast. This issue lists TV's most visible reporters during 1989.

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Major findings:

- **Eastern Europe** was 1989's leading TV news topic with 972 stories (three of the four most heavily covered topics were international.) *Page 2*

- **NBC's John Cochran** was 1989's most visible reporter on the evening news. Tom Brokaw was the most visible anchor. *Page 4*

- **Women filed only one story in seven,** nonwhites only one in eleven on the evening newscasts. *Page 5*

- **Oil spills** and other environmental threats produced the most topical jokes. *Page 6*

- **George Bush** edged out Dan Quayle as the most joked-about individual on late-night TV in 1989. *Page 6*

Newswatch

During 1989 we logged 14,400 news items broadcast on the ABC, CBS, and NBC evening news. Five of the ten leading topics also made our top ten last year - the USSR, Economy/Business, Panama, Health, and Drugs (*Media Monitor*, December 1988). Dropouts from the 1988 top ten were the Presidential election, Israel, the Persian Gulf, Defense issues, and Nicaragua. Our tally is based on substantive topics, so it doesn't include institutional "beats" like the Presidency and Congress. For example, a story about Congress' reaction to events in Poland would be included under "Eastern Europe." Congressional ethics, however, was a separate substantive topic (193 stories).

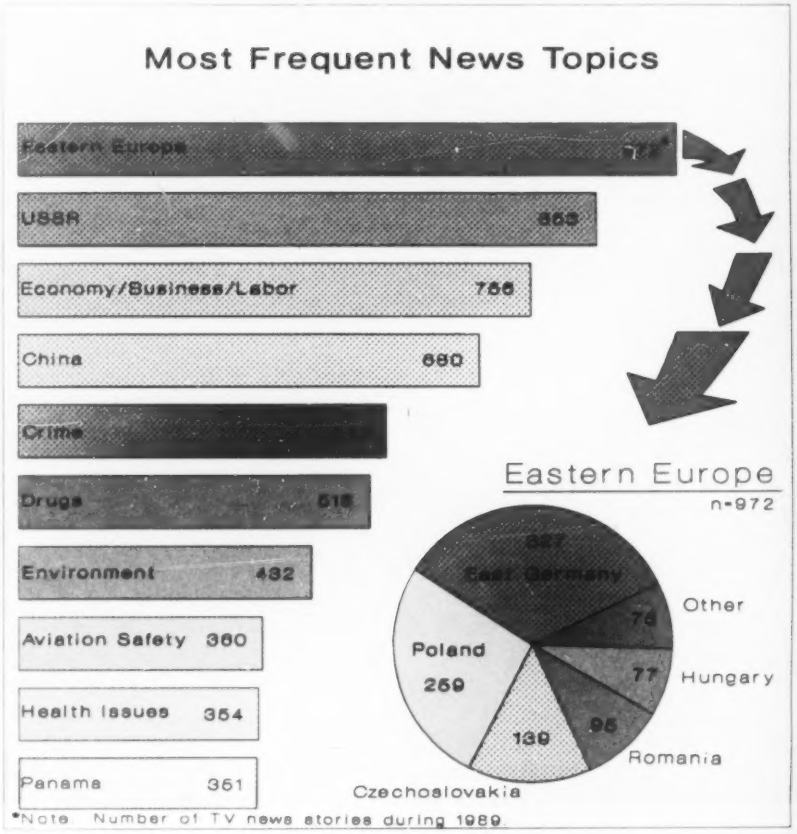
The Big Ten

#1 ***Eastern Europe*** The turmoil in Eastern Europe was the most heavily covered TV news topic of 1989. The region generated nearly 1000 stories, as the cameras followed successive waves of protest and reform from one country to the next. The heaviest coverage came from East Germany (327 stories), where the networks provided dramatic footage of the opening of the Berlin Wall. Close behind was the reform process in Poland (259 stories) that forced the Communist government to share power with Solidarity. Successful challenges to the Communist Parties of Czechoslovakia (139 stories), Hungary (77 stories), and (most dramatically and violently) Romania (95 stories) provided the other major stories. We treated the entire region as a single news topic because of the thematic similarities and regional emphasis in the coverage. The March 1990 *Media Monitor* will examine this story in depth. Thumbnail sketches of the remaining top ten topics:

#2 ***USSR*** Early coverage focused on the aftermath of the December 1988 Armenian earthquake. During the spring, attention shifted to Gorbachev's political reforms and visits abroad, the elections, and the first meeting of the new parliament. Continued ethnic unrest commanded attention, as did the new "insider" status of Boris Yeltsin and Andrei Sakharov. The fall brought news of Soviet reactions to the changing status of East Europe and continued demands for autonomy by non-Russian populations within the USSR. The U.S.-Soviet summit took a back seat to events in Eastern Europe, generating only 88 stories.

#3 ***Economy/Business*** On the domestic front, business and economic news provided the most heavily covered topic. Monthly statistics and other indicators of the state of the economy accounted for nearly a quarter of the coverage. These figures do not include the daily stock market reports. The Savings and Loan crisis loomed as both a political and economic story, accounting for a significant share of the coverage. Labor disputes, most prominently at Eastern Airlines and Pittston Coal, also shared the stage. A series of business mergers and buyouts rounded out the big stories, with most attention going to Japanese purchases in the U.S. and the sale of the Eastern Air Shuttle to Donald Trump.

#4 ***China*** The most visually compelling story of early 1989 was the subject of the September 1989 *Media Monitor*. Key findings: More TV news stories appeared on China during the month following Gorbachev's May 14 visit than



in the entire decade following the 1972 thaw in U.S.-China relations. Ironically, TV news visuals showed demonstrators committing violence nearly as often as the security forces. And ABC reporters gave far more positive assessments of Chinese state and society than their CBS or NBC colleagues.

#5 *Crime* This category was driven by high profile trials of celebrities like Leona Helmsley, Jim Bakker, and Zsa Zsa Gabor, along with white collar crimes such as the Saving and Loans and Wedtech scandals. Urban violence was also chronicled extensively, although we considered drug-related crime separately (see #6 below).

#6 *Drugs* Three quarters of the news on illegal drugs in 1989 aired after the upsurge of drug-related violence in Colombia in August and Bush's "drug war" speech on national TV in September. Drug Czar William Bennett's policies to combat drug abuse drew considerable attention, as did the administration's decision to increase the role of the U.S. military. If all stories on crime and drugs were combined into a single news topic, it would become the year's #1 topic, containing more than 1000 stories. The January 1989 *Media Monitor* looked at media coverage of the war on drugs during 1988.

#7 *Environment* Environmental news was dominated by oil spills, especially the Exxon Valdez spill in Alaska (See *Media Monitor,* April 1989). Major findings: Fewer than one source in five blamed Exxon for the accident. But 71% of sources criticized the company's clean-up efforts, and only 19% praised them. Overall, opinion on Exxon ran more than 2 to 1 negative on TV. Television news also broadcast nearly 100 different pictures of oil-coated animals during the two weeks after the accident. News about endangered species, pollution and global warming rounded out the environment coverage. The April 1990 *Media Monitor* will focus on environmental news.

#8 *Air Safety* This topic was dominated by the Sioux City crash in July and the investigation of the Lockerbie (Scotland) crash of December 1988. Terrorist bombings of flights from Chad and Colombia, as well as a threat against a Northwest flight, punctuated air safety concerns. This topic also included stories detailing new FAA safety procedures.

#9 *Health Issues* This topic included research and treatment of major illnesses such as AIDS and cancer, along with the problems of America's health care system. Health care also became a highly visible political issue when Congress was forced to repeal its catastrophic health care package. The health risks of smoking were a separate but less frequently reported topic.

What a year. And television was there.
-Peter Jennings
ABC News

The most important year for news in the five-decade history of television.
-Robert Goldberg
Wall Street Journal

#10 *Panama* Coverage jumped dramatically late in the year following an unsuccessful coup attempt and the subsequent American invasion. The invasion added more than 100 stories during the last ten days of December.

A second tier of major issues just outside the top ten also received considerable attention:

Israel (283) - Continued strife on the West Bank led the coverage of Israel. Middle East peace plans, including one from the Soviet Union, also figured prominently in the coverage.

Defense (273) - This topic was bolstered by two major stories: (1) The confirmation hearings and eventual rejection of John Tower as Secretary of Defense; (2) The U.S.S. Iowa explosion and a series of plane crashes raised serious questions about the safety of military equipment. Among weapons systems, the Stealth bomber attracted the most coverage. Budget concerns, espionage cases, and the safety of nuclear weapons manufacturing plants also figured into the coverage.

Lebanon (255) - This topic was dominated by discussions of the U.S. hostages. More than two-thirds of the stories aired during July and August, following the release of a videotape purporting to show the death of U.S. Army Col. William Higgins.

Japan (205) - The funeral of Emperor Hirohito was a major media event. Soon thereafter came news of government scandals that led to electoral setbacks for the (Liberal Democratic Party) and the ousting of three prime ministers.

South Africa (203) - Stories on racial violence and protests against apartheid were the most noticeable stories on this country. Attempts at political and legal reform also received attention. A change of Presidents brought additional media coverage.

Most Visible Reporters

			Reports
1.	John Cochran	(NBC)	156
2.	Brit Hume	(ABC)	143
3.	Lesley Stahl	(CBS)	115
4.	Andrea Mitchell	(NBC)	111
5.	David Martin	(CBS)	101
6.	Robert Hager	(NBC)	94
6.	John McWethy	(ABC)	94
8.	Rita Braver	(CBS)	93
9.	George Lewis	(NBC)	86
10.	Wyatt Andrews	(CBS)	80
11.	Jim Laurie	(ABC)	78
12.	Mark Phillips	(CBS)	72
13.	Jim Slade	(ABC)	70
14.	Jim Wooten	(ABC)	69
15.	Bob Simon	(CBS)	68
15.	Bob Zelnick	(ABC)	68
15.	Juan Vasquez	(CBS)	68
18.	Jerry King	(ABC)	65
18.	Barry Peterson	(CBS)	65
20.	Bob Abernathy	(NBC)	64
21.	Jerry Bowen	(CBS)	63
21.	Roger O'Neil	(NBC)	63
23.	Ray Brady	(CBS)	62
23.	Tim O'Brien	(ABC)	62
25.	Bill Plante	(CBS)	60

NOTE: Evening news only; excludes sports and commentary.

Each of the three network anchors is rated (by the public) as more believable than...George Bush, Ronald Reagan or Mikhail Gorbachev.

Michael Robinson and Norman Ornstein in *Washington Journalism Review*, 12/89

The Big Names

As part of our TV news archive, CMPA researchers recorded every appearance by an anchor or reporter on the ABC, CBS, and NBC evening newscasts during 1989. We then ranked all reporters in terms of the number of stories filed, excluding those correspondents who also served as part-time anchors. 1989's most visible reporters were the three networks' chief White House correspondents - NBC's John Cochran (156 stories), ABC's Brit Hume (143), and CBS's Lesley Stahl (115). This listing illustrates the importance of a major Washington "beat"; eight of the top ten reported from the White House, Congress, the Pentagon, State Department, or Justice Department.

(The exceptions were NBC's Robert Hager and George Lewis.)

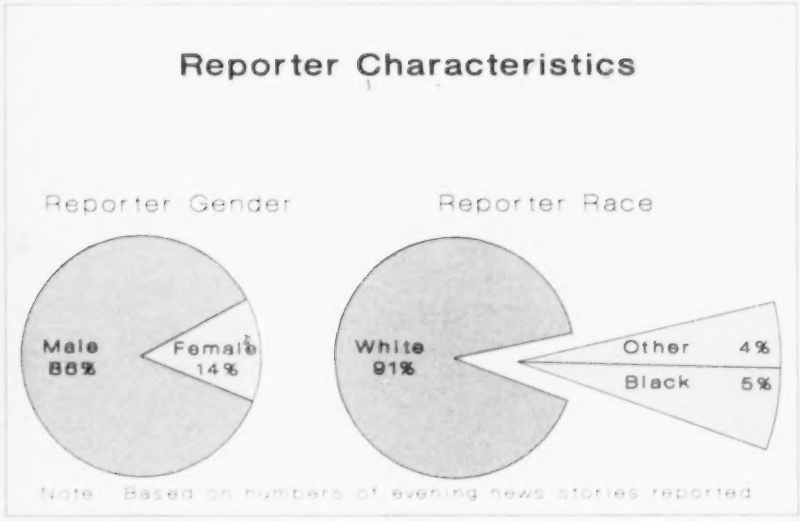
For network journalists who serve as full- or part-time anchors, we recorded all news items they contributed, whether in the form of in-studio "tell-stories" or on-site field reports. Our rankings normally excluded their introductions to correspondents' reports. Among the "big three," NBC's Tom Brokaw led with 1584 reports, followed by ABC's Peter Jennings (1456) and CBS's Dan Rather (1165). Brokaw's numbers were increased by NBC's use of regular features like "Assignment Earth," which consisted of brief items read by the anchor. Rather's total suffered somewhat from CBS's tendency to run fewer but longer stories than its competitors.

The remaining 14 anchors worked weekends, holidays, and as substitutes for the big three. This second tier was led by CBS's Bob Schieffer, whose 430 appearances also included his regular reports as a Congressional correspondent. Others who combined anchoring with a regular beat for the evening news include Carole Simpson and Susan Spencer. Several, such as Sam Donaldson and Diane Sawyer (Primetime Live) and Ted Koppel (Nightline)

Network Anchors

			News Items
1.	Tom Brokaw	(NBC)	1584
2.	Peter Jennings	(ABC)	1456
3.	Dan Rather	(CBS)	1165
4.	Bob Schieffer	(CBS)	430
5.	Garrick Utley	(NBC)	297
6.	Connie Chung	(NBC,CBS)	263
7.	Sam Donaldson	(ABC)	247
8.	Carole Simpson	(ABC)	202
9.	Susan Spencer	(CBS)	149
10.	Maria Shriver	(NBC)	136
11.	Mary Alice Williams	(NBC)	128
12.	Ted Koppel	(ABC)	117
13.	Diane Sawyer	(ABC)	72
14.	Forrest Sawyer	(ABC)	59
15.	Charles Kuralt	(CBS)	57
16.	Tom Jarriel	(ABC)	40
17.	Deborah Norville	(NBC)	32

NOTE: Evening news only.



hosted other news programs as their primary responsibility.

We also noted the gender and race of all reporters and anchors. Neither women nor minorities were much in evidence, although women held far more of the highly visible positions. Seven of the 17 regular anchors in 1989 (41%) were female, compared to only 3 of the 25 most visible reporters (although those 3 all placed among the top 8 in stories filed - Lesley Stahl, Andrea Mitchell, and Rita Braver). Overall, only 1 out of 7 stories (14%) was filed by a female reporter. The proportion stayed the same when anchor appearances are included, despite the presence of more women, because Brokaw, Jennings and Rather collectively made up such a high proportion of anchor appearances. Minorities were even less in evidence. The anchor and top reporter lists included only one black (Carole Simpson), one Asian (Connie Chung), and one Hispanic (Juan Vasquez). Overall, whites accounted for 91% of all reporter or anchor appearances, blacks for 5%, Asians 3%, and Hispanics 1%.

The Big Jokes

Since George Bush's inauguration on January 20, 1989, researchers have logged all jokes about public affairs or public figures by late-night TV comedians Johnny Carson, Jay Leno, and David Letterman. The most frequently joked-about topics and individuals are listed in the accompanying tables (p. 6).

Jokes about the environment focused mainly on the Exxon Valdez oil spill and Exxon's cleanup efforts. Most jokes about Iran were stimulated first by the Salman Rushdie "Satanic Verses" controversy and, later, the Ayatollah Khomeini's death and funeral. Humor about crime focused on the trials of celebrities like Leona Helmsley and Zsa Zsa Gabor. Jokes about religion usually involved the scandals surrounding televangalists Jim and Tammy Bakker and Jimmy Swaggart. Oliver North's trial brought a resurgence of Iran-contra jokes early in the year. Humor about Panama and its leader Manuel Noriega also followed the headlines, peaking late in the year.

Sample Topical Jokes:

Environment: "Top Ten New Exxon Slogans: Exxon transport: the Eastern Airlines of the sea...Now sardines automatically come with oil...Ecosystem, schmecosystem." (Letterman 3/29) "I was in the supermarket today - already they're selling Mrs. Paul's frozen dipsticks." (Leno 3/30)

China: "Top Ten Other Announcements by Chinese Government: The tanks were here just to do a little light moving...Deep sorrow swept China after Dan Rather left...There better not be any more protests like the one that didn't take place last month." (Letterman 6/21)

Passing the Torch

"The inauguration made me kind of sad. Here's this forceful man who led our thinking for eight years stepping down. I'm going to miss Sam Donaldson."

Jay Leno 1/90
The Tonight Show

USSR: "For the first time, they have achieved a society of complete equality. Nobody has anything." (Carson 11/8)

Congressional Ethics: "Some states are now offering a new twist on vanity license plates. For an extra $25 you can get your license plate made in prison by the Congressman of your choice.... The whole idea of the pay raise is to make (Congress) more honest.... So now instead of seeing a congressman on 'America's Most Wanted,' you can watch him on 'Lifestyles of The Rich and Famous.' " (Leno 6/21, 11/21)

Topical Jokes

1.	Environmental Threats	192
2.	Iran	114
3.	Crime/Drugs	107
4.	Panama	102
5.	Eastern Europe	87
5.	Religion	87
5.	USSR	87
8.	China	75
9.	Irancontra	56
10.	Congressional Ethics	55

Among individuals, the President is usually a major target of political humor. But this year the Vice-President almost matched his boss in punchlines. "Quayle jokes" threatened to become a distinct genre, usually involving stupidity or childishness. Gone but not forgotten was ex-President Reagan, whose well-paid trip to Japan stimulated an outpouring of humor that placed him third among individual targets of jokes.

Sample Personal Jokes:

Bush: "ABC is going to make a movie based on the World War II exploits of George Bush...You can spot him right away in the movie. He has the only flight jacket with a little alligator on it.... Bush is backing the 35% pay raise for Congress. Now this is the same man who has been against the 90 cent increase in the minimum wage. I've got an idea: Why don't they give the poor the 35% raise and Congress the 90 cents?" (Carson 10/4, 11/16.

Quayle: "Overheard at Bush's birthday party: 'This gift has special meaning to me, Mr. Quayle, because you colored it yourself.' " (Letterman 6/13) "Bush said that Quayle would definitely be on the ticket in 1992. So from all the comedians in the world, 'Thank you, Mr. Bush!' " (Carson 11/8)

Reagan: "There was another huge influx of Japanese money into the American economy today - Reagan mailed his check home." (Carson 11/3)

Personal Jokes

1.	George Bush	143
2.	Dan Quayle	135
3.	Ronald Reagan	79
4.	Manuel Noriega	74
5.	Jim & Tammy Bakker	66
6.	Ayatollah Khomeini	60
6.	John Tower	60
8.	Jim Wright	33
9.	Oliver North	28
10.	Rob Lowe	22

Noriega: "Manuel Noriega's Top Ten New Year's Resolutions: "No more declaring war on really big countries....Don't trust anybody talking about a kinder, gentler nation." (Letterman 12/29)

The Bakkers: "I think Jim Bakker got a raw deal...Tammy Faye wears wigs, phony eyelashes, a ton of makeup, and he's the one who got convicted of fraud." (Leno 10/27)

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Media Monitor

Center for Media and Public Affairs • 2101 L Street, NW • Suite 505 • Washington, D.C. 20037 202-223-2942

Volume IV, Number 2 February 1990

The News in Black and White

National Media Coverage of Race Relations in America

How do the media cover the controversial topic of relations between blacks and whites in America? To find out we analyzed stories on black-white relations that appeared on network evening newscasts and in national news magazines during 1989. We logged 318 stories on race relations, including 204 broadcast on the ABC, CBS, and NBC nightly news (total airtime 6 hours 24 minutes) and 114 printed in *Time*, *Newsweek*, and *U.S. News and World Report* (2302 column inches of text).

Major findings:

- **Racist Nation?** - One out of three sources on TV news argued that America is racist. Only 2% saw racism as an isolated individual phenomenon. *Page 5*

- **Intolerant Institutions** - The institutions most frequently charged with bias were business, the justice system, the schools, government, sports, and religion. *Page 5*

- **Affirmative Reactions** - Two out of three sources endorsed affirmative action programs. Among those quoted on "reverse discrimination," however, more than 90% agreed that such programs are unfair to whites. *Page 4*

- **Racial Politics** - Seven out of eight sources treated race as a polarizing factor in elections. But a majority argued against campaign strategies that emphasized race. *Page 3*

- **Black, White, and Blue** - A majority of sources foresaw an increase in racial intolerance. Only one in five predicted a decline. *Page 6*

Media Monitor (Copyright 1990) is published ten times a year by the Center for Media and Public Affairs, a nonpartisan and nonprofit research organization. The Center conducts scientific studies of how the media treat social and political issues.

Editors:
Dr. S. Robert Lichter
Dr. Linda S. Lichter

Research Director:
Daniel Amundson

Research Assistants:
Margarida Yuan

Production and Graphics:
Mary Carroll Gunning
Allison Schaengold

Public Affairs Director:
Toni Grueninger

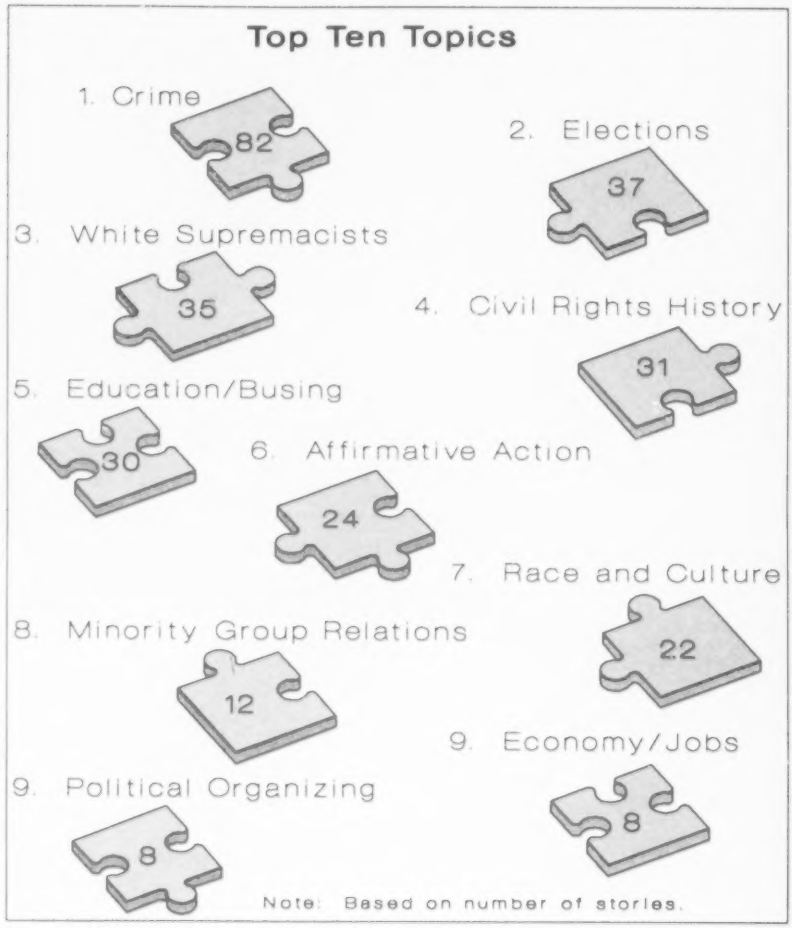
***

In the News

To determine how the national media covered race relations in America, we analyzed all stories that discussed relations between blacks and whites throughout 1989. This year-long sample covered a wide range of events and issues. Early in the year the coverage included riots in Miami over the killing of two black men by a Hispanic policeman, Supreme Court rulings that limited affirmative action rules, and former Ku Klux Klan member David Duke's successful race for the Louisiana state legislature. In March, student protests at Howard University forced Republican Party chairman Lee Atwater to resign from the Board of Trustees. In July a black priest, Rev. George Stallings, challenged the Catholic Church's record on race, and news reports argued that the black-white economic gap is growing.

In August the Senate rejected the Bush administration's choice of a black Republican, William Lucas, to head the Justice Department's Civil Rights Division, and an apparently racially motivated murder of a black man in Brooklyn's Bensonhurst section inflamed racial tensions in New York. The fall brought hotly contested (and heavily reported) elections that produced victories for a black mayor of New York City and governor of Virginia. As the year ended the FBI was investigating mail bombs that were sent to civil rights activists, and Boston was embroiled in the racially charged Stuart murder case.

Altogether, the three television networks together devoted 204 stories to race relations with a cumulative airtime of 6 hours 24 minutes. There was little difference in the amount of coverage: NBC ran 73 stories (2 hours 17 minutes), ABC broadcast 69 (2 hours 8 minutes) and CBS aired 62 (1 hour 59 minutes). There was more variation at the major newsweeklies, which together printed 114 stories totalling 2302 column inches of text. The coverage was heaviest at *Time* -- 40 stories running 955 inches. *Newsweek* printed more stories (43), but many were brief items, and their cumulative length was only 764 inches. *U.S. News and World Report* finished last with 31 articles and 583 inches.



Race in Review

Thus, 1989 brought a great variety of race-related stories, with no one issue or event dominating the coverage. The leading topics were: 1. ***Crime*** (82 stories) Crime news far outdistanced all other topics of inquiry. This topic included such divergent incidents as violent crimes in New York's Central Park and Bensonhurst, the riots in Virginia Beach during Labor Day weekend, the Stuart murder case in Boston, and the police shooting in Miami. It also encompassed broader discussions of the relationship between crime and race and allegations of racism in the courts and police departments.

2. ***Elections*** (37) Most election news focused on the victories of such black leaders as New York mayor David Dinkins and Virginia governor

Douglas Wilder. Other news involving black candidates included mayoral races in Chicago and Seattle.

3. ***White Supremacists*** (35) The centerpiece was former Klan leader David Duke's Republican campaign in Louisiana. More radical white supremacy groups and "skinheads" also attracted attention.

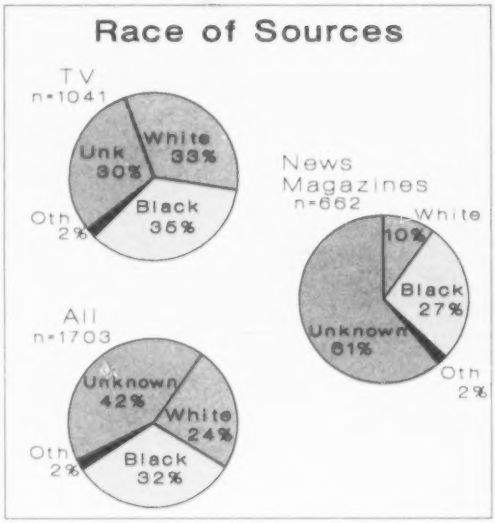
4. ***Civil Rights History*** (31) Stories recounting the civil rights era were spurred by cultural events like the movie "Mississippi Burning," PBS's "Eyes on the Prize II," and Ralph Abernathy's book on Martin Luther King.

5. ***Education/Busing*** (30) Racism on campus was a popular news topic. Questions about educational testing and academic opportunity came together in a battle over NCAA scholarship guidelines (Proposition 42). School busing became a political issue in Seattle and Kansas City.

6. ***Affirmative Action*** (24) Debate was driven by Supreme Court decisions that struck down minority set-asides, as well as the Senate's consideration of William Lucas to head the Justice Department's Civil Rights Division.

7. ***Race and Culture*** (22) Race as a theme of cultural creations surfaced frequently in discussions of "Mississippi Burning," Spike Lee's "Do The Right Thing," Eddie Murphy's "Harlem Nights," and Arsenio Hall's late-night TV talk show.

Rounding out the top ten were ***minority group relations*** (12 stories), such as tensions between blacks and Hispanics in Miami; ***economy/jobs*** (8), focusing on the black-white economic gap; and ***political organizing*** (8), stories on how blacks can organize to attain electorial success.



Invisible No More

Opinion on race relations came more often from blacks than from whites, although the race of the largest number of sources could not be identified. Blacks outnumbered whites at every outlet, bu' the margin of difference varied greatly. There was nearly an even split on TV news, with blacks (35%) and whites (33%) each accounting for about a third of all sources, and the rest unknown. In the news magazines, among sources whose race was identified, black voices outnumbered whites by nearly three to one (27% to 10%). But the "unknown" category was far larger, nearly two out of every three sources.

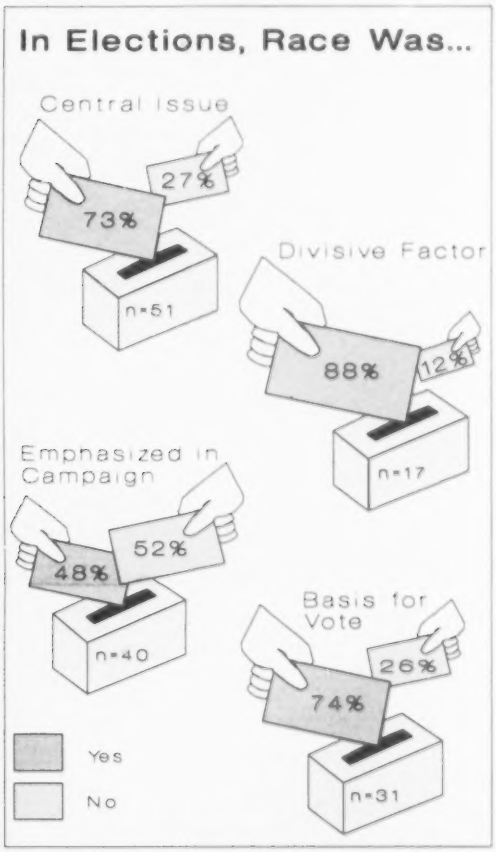
Statements were offered most often by representatives of city governments (169 times), since the stories were often city-specific. Federal officials came next (112), followed by educators (97) and scholars or think tank residents (93). The fifth largest source group (84 citations) consisted of civil rights organizations and their leaders (Jesse Jackson was included in this category). Sixth were entertainers (70 citations) like Spike Lee and Arsenio Hall. Congress accounted for 56 citations, including 12 from members of the Black Caucus. Black leaders not listed elsewhere, like Rev. George Stallings and Rev. Al Sharpton, accounted for 57 quotes. The top ten was rounded out by sports figures (22 appearances) like Georgetown basketball coach John Thompson.

Among black organizations, the NAACP stood out with 29 quotes, more than three times as many as the runner-up Urban League (9 quotes). Among individuals, Jesse Jackson was the unchallenged leader with 20 quotes, far ahead of Douglas Wilder (11), David Dinkins, and Martin Luther King III (7 apiece).

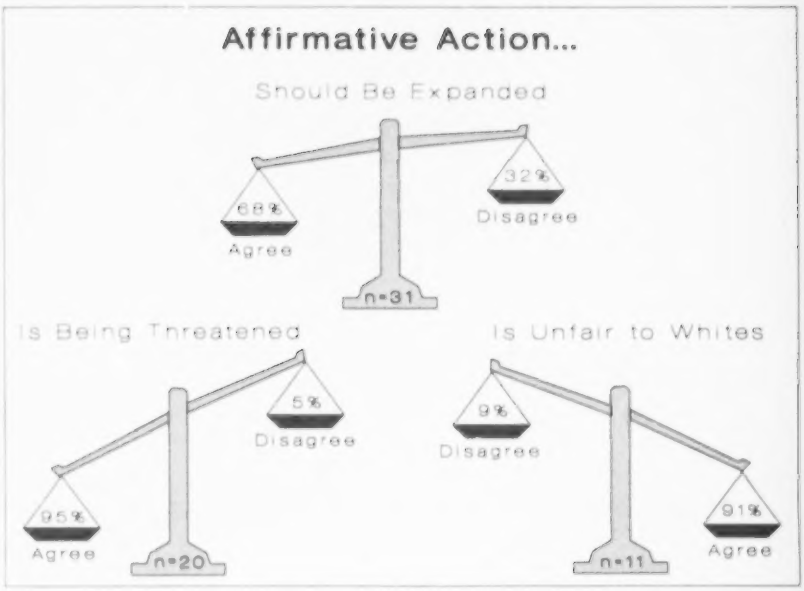
At the Polls

We examined all stories that dealt with the role played by racial factors in elections. New York City and Virginia produced the lion's share of the coverage, but the racial aspects of many other contests were covered. In these stories, race was usually treated as a central feature

of the contests. Its importance was stressed nearly three times as often as it was downplayed (73% to 27%). For example, *US News* (1/2) asserted that, in Chicago, "the issue of race looms behind almost every position, every speech, every vote." By an even more decisive margin (88% to 12%), the media portrayed race as a polarizing factor in elections, dividing the electorate along racial lines. Thus, *US News* (1/2) noted "a deepening political polarization of black and white America." And once again, by a three to one margin (74% to 26%), news reports (including many post-election analyses) concluded that voters tended to base their voting choices on the race of the candidates. Sample: "Wilder was forced to eke out such a narrow victory only because he was a black candidate." (*Time*, 11/20)



Only the topic of campaign strategy produced a nearly even split on the role of race. Those arguing that racial differences should or would be emphasized in order to win were barely outvoted (52% to 48%) by those who downplayed the race card in campaigning. For example, *Newsweek* (9/25) quoted columnist



Ken Auletta on the role of race in New York City's Democratic primary between Koch and Dinkins: "If you mention it, you lose."

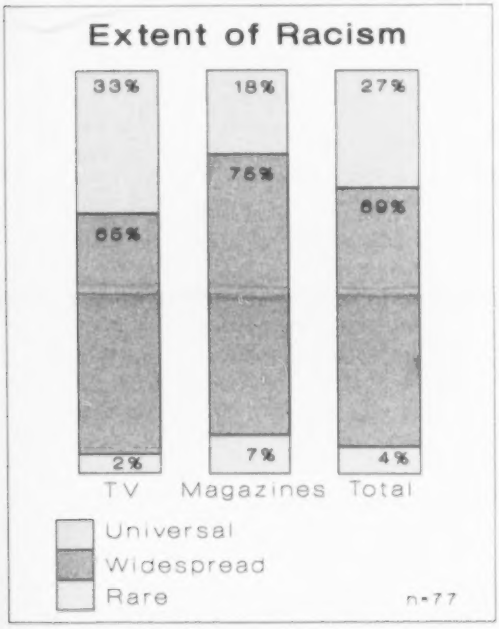
Affirmative Action

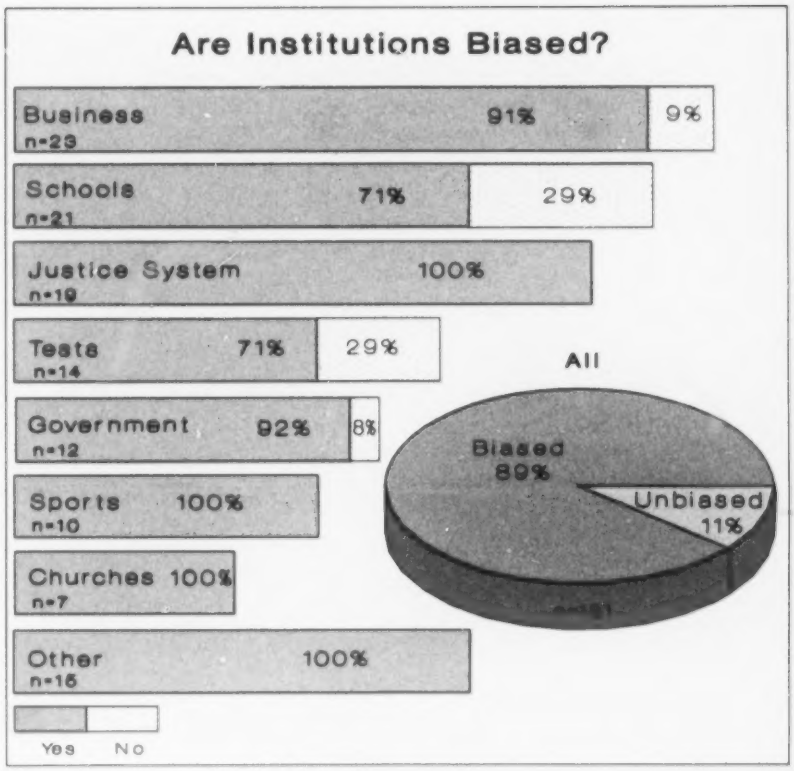
The most significant policy debate concerned affirmative action. There was little dissent on the current status of affirmative action. Ninety five percent of sources agreed that it is threatened or being dismantled. Virtually all, however, also believed that its principles or programs were still capable of being restored. Views on the appropriateness of affirmative action depended on how the issue was phrased. The question posed most often was whether government or the private sector should take an active role in promoting affirmative action programs such as minority set-asides. Sources endorsed such programs by a two to one margin (68% to 32%). A smaller number of sources, however, raised the question of reverse discrimination. Most (91%) agreed that affirmative action did discriminate against whites. For example, ABC (2/17) quoted David Duke, "Affirmative action is nothing more than minority racism, anti-white racial discrimination..."

Racism in America

By far the most widely discussed area was racism or racial bias--how extensive is it, where and when does it occur, is it increasing or diminishing? We first examined general statements about the extent of racial intolerance in American society. More than one in four sources (29%) argued unequivocally that America is a racist nation, or that racism is so ingrained that it is the norm for this country. Thus, a New York City official argued in *Time* (3/13), "No matter what I accomplish as an individual, I will always be judged by what people see first, my color."

Most sources were highly critical but not so global in their condemnations. Sixty-nine percent stated that racism is common or prevalent in some areas of American life or some localities, but did not characterize the entire country as intrinsically racist. For example, during the Virginia Governor's race *Newsweek* cited unnamed "neutral observers" to argue that "Wilder would be far ahead...if it were not for a residue of unreconstructed racism in pockets of the Old Dominion." Only 4% held that racism is an isolated individual occurrence that does not reflect widespread or structural problems. On TV 33% of sources issued a general condemnation of America as racist, compared to only 18% of news magazine sources. At the other end of the spectrum, 7% of magazine sources saw discrimination as an isolated occurrence, more than three times the number on TV (2%).

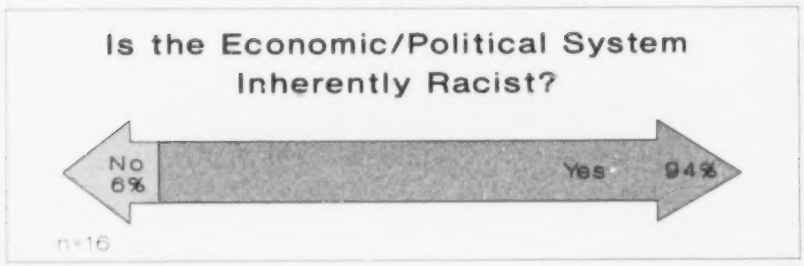




Institutional Bias

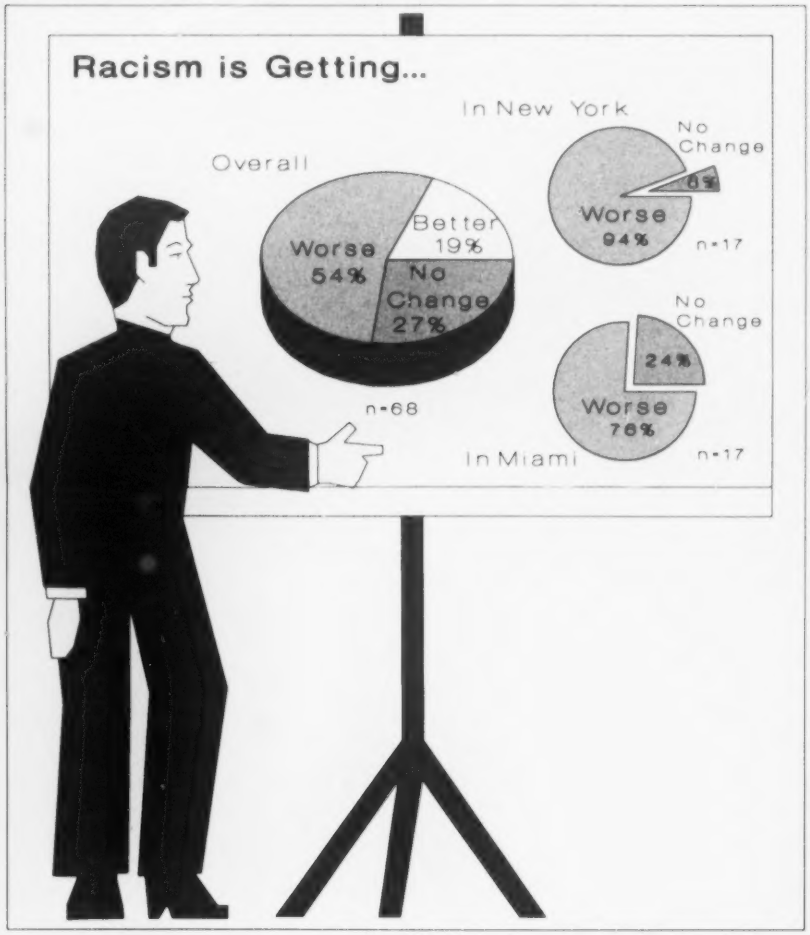
Specific allegations of bias were raised against a wide range of institutions. Regardless of the institution involved, charges of racism were rarely rebutted. Overall, charges of discrimination outnumbered denials by more than 8 to 1 (89% to 11%). The largest number of charges were levelled against business and the economic sector. These charges were supported by a 91% to 9% margin. For example, "redlining" by banks and mortgage companies was criticized several times. Another frequent target was the education system, although 29% of those quoted did defend the schools against bias changes. The justice system, by contrast, found no defenders against sources who charged discrimination by the police or the

courts (mostly the former). Educational testing was the only other area that provoked a semblance of debate, with 71% arguing that tests are unfair and 29% disagreeing. For example, *Newsweek* (1/20) cited basketball coach John Thompson's complaint that the SAT and ACT college entrance exams are "culturally biased" against minorities. But the same issue printed the College Board's rejoinder that, "the problem is not with our tests, but with society." No other institution fared as well as those linked to education. Government at all levels was roundly condemned (92% to 8%) for bias, and both sports and religion suffered unanimous criticism. For example, ABC (7/2) quoted Rev. George Stallings' assertion that, "The Catholic Church is a white racist institution."



Roots of Racism

Beyond particular charges of bias, we examined the issue of structural racism in the economic and political system. Do we live in a system designed by and for whites that necessarily discriminates against minorities? Or is the system essentially fair or open to reform, despite particular instances of discrimination? Virtually all sources who addressed this issue (94%) agreed that racism is rooted in the American system. For example, *US News* (11/27) quoted a report that concluded, "African Americans... have all been victims of an intellectual and cultural oppression that has characterized the culture and institutions of the United States... for centuries."



A Bleak Future?

Finally, we examined all assessments of changes in the degree of racism or intolerance. Many of these were keyed to conditions in specific cities with racial problems. Thus, 94% of sources saw racism increasing in New York City, 6% saw no change, and no one argued that the climate was improving. In Miami, 74% foresaw worsening race relations, 26% forecast no change, and no one was sanguine about the future. Another area of concern was the nation's college campuses, where 80% of sources described growing intolerance, 20% saw no change, and no one could see a positive trend. Among all sources, a majority (54%) said that racism was increasing, 19% said that bigotry was in decline, and 27% saw no change. *Time* (8/7) even criticized any purveyors of positive thinking, "How beguiling it has been for white Americans to forget. How tempting to ignore the evidence that discrimination endures."

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Center for Media and Public Affairs • 2101 L Street NW • Suite 505 • Washington D.C. 20037 202-223-2942

Volume IV Number 3 March 1990

Drawing Back the Iron Curtain

TV News Coverage of Eastern Europe in 1989

How have the media covered the reform movement in Eastern Europe? To find out we analyzed all stories on countries in the region that appeared on the television network evening newcasts during 1989. We coded 1068 stories broadcast on the ABC, CBS, and NBC nightly news (total airtime 27 hours 48 minutes). That made events in Eastern Europe the most heavily covered TV news story of 1989.

Major findings:

■ **Give Gorby Credit...** - Gorbachev received credit for the changes in Eastern Europe five times as often as the Reagan-Bush defense policies. *Page 5*

■ **Bad News** - More than four out of five evaluations of the region were negative. Hungary got the best press (50% positive), Romania the worst (98% negative). *Page 4*

■ **Old News** - Nearly half of all historical film footage appeared on NBC. That network aired twice as many film clips on East Germany's past as ABC and CBS combined. *Page 6*

■ **Ill Winds** - Only one source in 16 saw any positive effects on either the West or the USSR. *Page 5*

■ **Czech Points** - East Germany and Poland got the most coverage but Czech nationals were quoted most often. *Page 3*

■ **Together Again?** - On CBS more than three out of four sources favored German reunification. On ABC and NBC majorities were opposed. *Page 6*

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Editors:
Dr. S. Robert Lichter
Dr. Linda S. Lichter

Research Director:
Daniel Amundson

Project Director:
Tim McLaughlin

Research Assistants
Carl Lichvarcik

Production and Graphics
Mary Carroll Gunning
Allison Schaengold

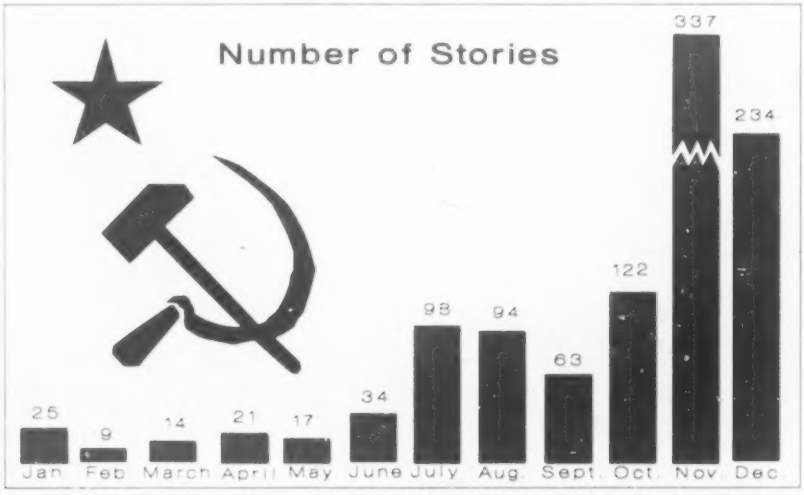
Public Affairs Director:
Toni Grueninger

***

In the News

To determine how television news has covered the recent movement for change in Eastern Europe we analyzed all stories that discussed the region during 1989. Altogether, the three network evening newscasts devoted 1068 stories to the region with a cumulative airtime of 27 hours 48 minutes. The networks differed only slightly in their amounts of coverage. CBS devoted the most airtime (9 hours 30 minutes) despite running the fewest stories (331). ABC ran 367 stories (9 hours 12 minutes) and NBC aired 370 reports (9 hours 6 minutes).

The coverage was lightest during the early part of the year, dealing largely with background stories and growing pressure for reforms in Poland and Hungary. The news picked up in May with the rehabilitation of former Hungarian Prime Minister Imre Nagy. In June, the Polish trade union Solidarity won a landslide victory in multi-party elections and Hungary's Communist leader was replaced by a coalition of reformers. Poland and Hungary continued to dominate the coverage throughout the summer, as they were visited by President Bush, Poland named its first non-communist Prime Minister since the second World War, and Hungary began dismantling the "Iron Curtain" along its border with Austria. East Germany was rocked by demonstrations in September and October that forced Communist ruler Erich Honecker from power. But even this coverage paled in comparison to the mega-story still to come.



The news peaked in November as ferment embroiled the entire region. East Germany lifted travel restrictions to the West and the Berlin Wall came down. In Bulgaria Todor Zhivkov, the longest ruling Communist leader in Eastern Europe, resigned. Meanwhile, a rapid succession of events brought down the Communist government of Czechoslovakia. Opposition groups pressured the government with demonstrations and strikes that brought outlawed playwright Vaclav Havel to the presidential palace. All this produced a single month's high of 337 stories, more than eleven per day on average, and nearly three times as many as in October.

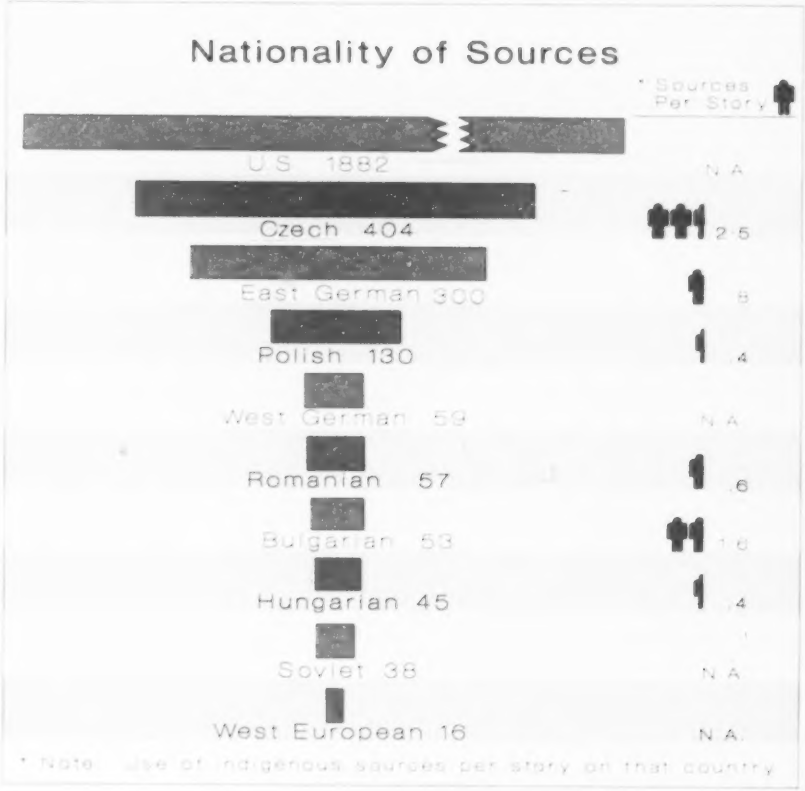
As turmoil continued to sweep the region, in late December reports of massacres in Romania sparked a bloody civil war that deposed hardliner Nicolae Ceaucescu. Intensive news coverage included grisly film footage of the executed dictator and his wife Elena. The result was a remarkable total of 591 stories on Eastern Europe in the last two months of 1989, exceeding the already heavy coverage of the previous ten months combined.

Spotlight on Eastern Europe

During 1989 the countries of Eastern Europe appeared more than one thousand times as the topics of TV news stories. East Germany led the way with 396 stories, more than 35% of the total. Also ahead of the pack was Poland, whose 287 stories put it more than 100 stories ahead of Czechoslovakia's 160. The field then narrowed, with 108 stories on Hungary and 100 on Romania. Bulgaria (34), Yugoslavia (11) and Albania (2) were the also rans of the news agenda.

East Germany was propelled to prominence by events like the ouster of Communist ruler Erich Honecker, waves of refugees fleeing to the West, the fall of the Berlin Wall and talk of German reunification. In Poland, the coverage centered on political changes that included multi-party elections and the first non-communist Prime Minister in the Eastern Bloc. Czechoslovakia dominated the news with a rapid wave of democratic reforms in November and December. Political reforms and a visit by President Bush contributed to Hungary's numbers. Romania's coverage jumped sharply in late December, while in the throes of a violent revolution.

Despite overall similarities in their coverage, the networks differed in the attention they paid to particular countries. CBS ran the most stories on Poland (105) while ABC (90) and NBC (92) paid almost identical amounts of attention to this country. On the other hand, CBS ran only 19 stories on Romania, far fewer than either NBC (36) or ABC (45). Thus CBS aired more than five stories on Poland for every story on Romania, compared to a ratio of only two to one on ABC.



"Freedom is like crabgrass, it's hard to kill."

-Bruce Morton
CBS, 11/10/89

Look Who's Talking

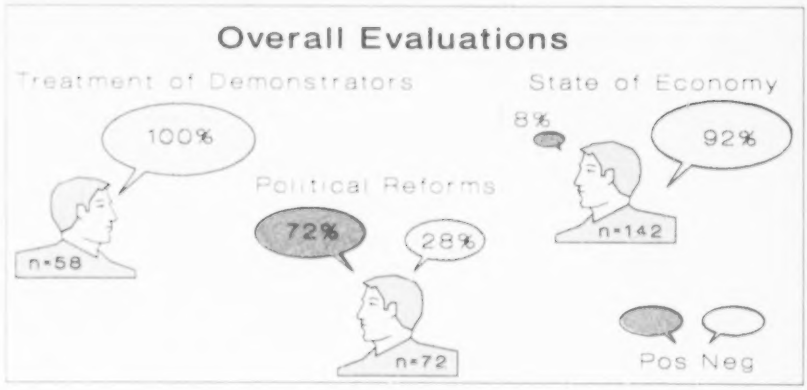
The coverage of Eastern Europe featured a multitude of sources, 3047 in all. Americans made up a substantial majority of this total - 1882, or 62% of all sources. Nonetheless, that left 1165 foreign nationals whose voices were heard on American television. But the Eastern European source list did not follow directly from the networks' news agenda. Although the heaviest coverage went to East Germany and Poland, Czechoslovakians were featured most often as sources, with 404 quotations or citations. East German citizens provided the next largest group of sources (300), but Poles were far behind with only 130 sources. Less frequently heard from were Romanians (57), Bulgarians (53), and Hungarians (45).

To highlight these differences, we computed the number of indigenous sources per story in each country. The news on Czechoslovakia averaged 2.5 indigenous sources per story, three times the rate of East German sources (.8 source per story) and more than five times that of the Poles (less than .5 source per story). Among the region's remaining countries, only Bulgaria averaged more than one indigenous source per story (1.6). Among the reasons for this disparity: stories on Poland dealt in large part with international (especially American) reaction to the events there. Stories on East Germany frequently featured comments from accessible West Germans, especially on the subject of reunification. Finally, Czechoslovakia provided an

unbeatable combination for television interviewers - lots of rallies and demonstrations, along with ready access to the participants. As a result, that country's coverage featured by far the most man-on-the-street interviews.

Outside the region, West German sources were cited 59 times, reflecting their country's significance as a haven for refugees, a champion for change and a model for reform. The Soviets were also coded frequently (38 sources) mostly providing official reaction to the upheaval.

There were marked differences in the degree to which the networks relied on indigenous sources in the various East European countries. NBC featured by the far the most Czech sources (175); ABC followed with 135 and CBS with 94. By contrast, CBS quoted Poles nearly as often (63 times) as its two competitors combined - 34 on ABC and 33 on NBC. ABC quoted Bulgarian sources far more often than the other networks (28) (CBS 8, NBC 17). However, ABC used only 5 Hungarian sources compared to 22 on CBS and 18 on NBC.



Pros and Cons

We examined televised opinion on East Europe, defined as positive or negative viewpoints on topical issues. The state of the East European economies led the way with 142 evaluations. An overwhelming 92% of these evaluations were negative. Much of the criticism focused on long food lines, burdensome foreign debt and low worker productivity. The few positive evaluations came largely from comparative assessments, e. g., arguments that the reforms will make things better.

Opinions on political reforms were the next most frequent topic discussed. Seventy two percent of all sources praised such reforms as open elections and the lifting of travel restrictions, making this the only major area of good press for the region. Sample positive assessment, by a Soviet officer, "I think the East German government took the right steps." (ABC, 11/12/89) Sample negative vote, by an East German citizen, "We think it is not enough...it's not good." (CBS, 11/6/89).

The worst press concerned the treatment of demonstrators; 58 sources unanimously condemned the government crackdowns. Most of the criticisms (45 sources) were aimed at Romania. The coverage centered on reports of massacres, mass graves and brutal treatment of demonstrators.

A notable feature of this coverage was the willingness of American journalists to state their own opinions. Reporters accounted for nearly two out of every five opinions (38%) aired on conditions in Eastern Europe. But on-air journalistic opinion did not differ sharply from assessments by other sources.

With the sole exception of Hungary, all East European countries were assessed in overwhelmingly negative terms. Poland, the country evaluated most often (158 times), came in with a 73% negative rating. Its failing economy accounted for a large part of this criticism. East Germany, once praised as East Europe's economic success story, was assessed 139 times, 67% of them negative. Czechoslovakia (81% negative) ranked second only to Romania in negative evaluations. The bloody repression and revolution in Romania sparked an intense period of evaluation (81 times), most late in December. Vir-

tually all assessments were negative (98%), including 45 negative evaluations on the treatment of demonstrators.

Hungary alone achieved a balanced rating of 50% positive and 50% negative evaluations. This relatively positive portrayal was due in large part to its history as the most reform-minded Communist country, whose transition to relative democracy was easiest. The three networks were remarkably similar in their evaluative coverage of Eastern Europe. The networks differed slightly in their treatment of particular countries, but the ratio of good to bad press never varied much from one network to another.

Leading Contributors to Change

Freedom of Movement	32
Failure of Communism	29
Soviet Reforms	20
Domestic Repression	13
Polish Reforms	8
U.S. Policies	4

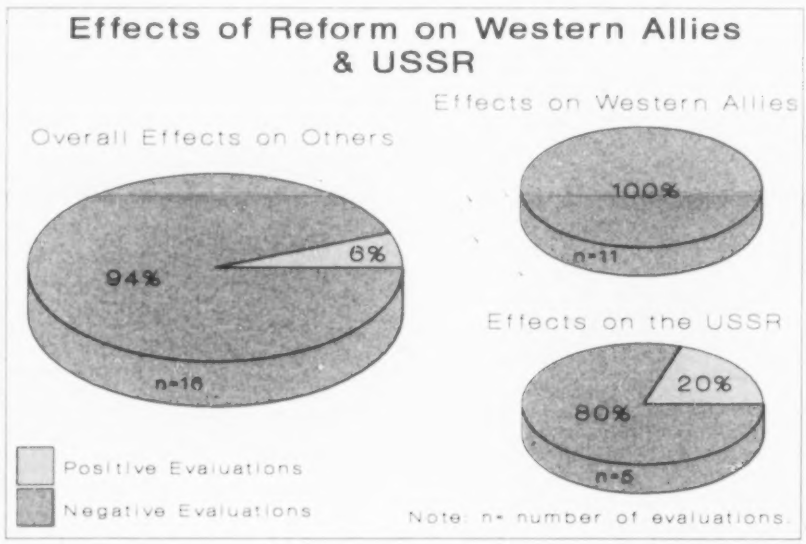
Note: Number of sources listing each factor.

Where Credit Is Due

We noted all explanations that the networks offered for the sudden outbreak of political and economic reform. Topping the list was the new-found freedom of movement in the region. Thirty-two sources credited the opening of borders and increased mobility with precipitating some aspect of the upheaval. Included here were the dismantling of the "Iron Curtain" between Hungary and Austria, the ban on travel restrictions, and the waves of refugees to the West.

Among the more fundamental underlying causes cited, the failure of Communism was paramount, with 29 mentions. Various sources pointed out the social, political and economic ruin wrought by Marxism-Leninism. For example, an executive at the Lenin Shipyards in Gdansk told CBS's Bob Simon, "We were not allowed to raise the salaries above, from year to year, exceeding a certain level. And that was the main reason why we were losing the people." Simon than asked, "So the Lenin Shipyard was destroyed by Leninist economics?" The reply: "You can say so." (CBS, 7/11)

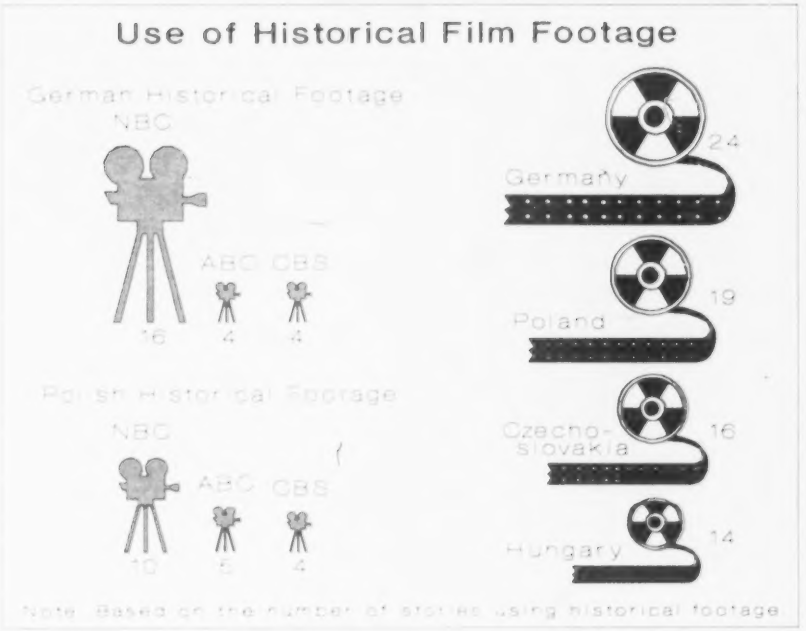
Frequent credit (20 mentions) was also given to the reforms Gorbachev brought to the USSR. For example, ABC's Barry Dunsmore cited an unnamed West German diplomat who asserted that, "East Germany's Stalinist leaders consider Gorbachev's economic and political reforms the principal cause of their problem." (ABC, 9/12) Indeed, Gorbachev won the race for credit in a runaway over Reagan and Bush. The argument that the hardline defense policies of the Reagan and Bush administrations helped cause the fall of Communism in Eastern Europe was cited by only 4 sources. One of the exceptions was a Republican congressman who declared, "Thank you, Ronald Reagan. Without you it would never have happened." (ABC 11/14) The favored perspective was that Communism in the Eastern Bloc crumbled from the inside out, not from the outside in.



Ill Winds of Change

The birth of reforms and new freedoms for Eastern Europe might be assumed to have a positive effect on all involved. However, television news coverage featured mostly negative assessments of the effect the region's reforms will have on both the Western Allies and the Soviet Union. Out of 16 sources who assessed the economic, political, and military effects on either the East or West, only one was positive. No sources as-

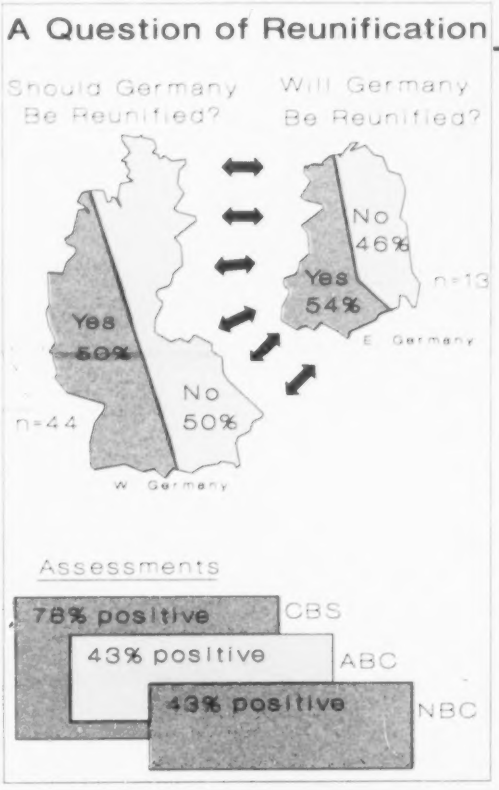
sessed the effects on the West as positive, while 11 stressed the downside For example, in a story dealing with the effects of defense cuts in the U.S., CBS's David Martin concluded: "There will almost certainly be some short term unemployment as production lines close or slow down." Similarly, four out of five sources gave negative assessments of the effects on the Soviets. For instance, on Aug. 22 ABC quoted Antony Polonsky of the London School of Economics, "(Gorbachev's) hardline opponents can say 'look what you've done, this demonstrates that as soon as you relax the brakes the system becomes unmanageable.'"



The Way We Were

Historical film footage was used extensively in news coverage of East European reform efforts to dramatize comparisons with past struggles (88 stories). More stories (24) contained historical footage of East Germany than any other country. Events shown most often were the 1953 Berlin uprising and past attempts to escape to the West. Poland was second with 19 stories, many showing the rise of Lech Walesa and Solidarity. Czechoslovakia (16) and Hungary (14) followed, as the networks featured footage of their unsuccessful uprisings in 1968 and 1956 respectively.

NBC used the backdrop of historical film footage to frame its coverage nearly as often as the other two networks combined (43 of 88 stories). The difference was especially pronounced in East German coverage, as NBC aired 16 stories with historical footage, twice as many as the other two networks combined (4 on ABC, 4 on CBS). NBC also ran the majority of the Polish film footage (10 stories, compared to 5 on ABC and 4 on CBS).



The German Question

Possible reunification of East and West Germany became a hot topic in 1989. The media vote split evenly as 22 sources favored unification and 22 opposed it. Sample pro-vote, from West German Chancellor Helmut Kohl: "We are one nation. And we belong together." (ABC 11/10) Sample anti-vote, from Soviet spokesman Gennadi Gerasimov: "Not a single country in Europe wishes to have a united Germany because it fears the present stability in Europe would be undermined." (NBC 11/29)

Although sources were split overall, the networks differed significantly on this issue. On CBS more than three out of four sources (78%) favored unification. On both ABC and NBC, in contrast, this position attracted support from only 43% of those quoted. Predictions on the outcome of the German question were balanced. Seven sources predicted that Germany will again be unified, while six disputed this forecast.

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Media Monitor

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Volume IV Number 4 April 1990

Preserving the Planet

Media Coverage of the Environment During 1989

How have the media covered the environmental debate? To find out we analyzed all stories on the environment that appeared on the television network evening newscasts and in the weekly news magazines during 1989. We examined 595 news items, including 453 stories broadcast on the ABC, CBS, and NBC nightly news with a cumulative airtime of 13 hours 44 minutes, and 142 articles in *Time*, *Newsweek* and *U.S. News and World Report*.

Major findings:

- **Lube Tube** -- Oil spills generated nearly half (47%) of TV's environmental stories, but only 18% of the news magazine articles. *Page 2*

- **Blaming Business** -- Business was blamed for environmental problems more than three times as often as anyone else. Ratings of business's handling of environmental issues were 82% negative. *Page 5*

- **Crisis Coverage** -- 40% of sources said environmental problems had reached a crisis; none expressed doubt that a crisis was coming. *Page 6*

- **Green News** -- The Natural Resource Defense Council was the most frequently cited environmental group overall. But the Wilderness Society showed up most often on TV news. *Page 3*

- **Featured Creatures** -- Otters were mentioned almost twice as often as any other animal, followed by shellfish, whales, seals and eagles. *Page 6*

- **Earthy Humor** -- Late night TV comedians made environmental threats the leading source of topical humor in 1989. Exxon was the target of more jokes than George Bush or Dan Quayle. *Page 6*

Media Monitor (Copyright 1990) is published ten times a year by the Center for Media and Public Affairs, a nonpartisan and nonprofit research organization. The Center conducts scientific studies of how the media treat social and political issues. Yearly corporate ($50.00) and individual ($25.00) subscriptions are available.

Editors:
Dr. S. Robert Lichter
Dr. Linda S. Lichter

Research Director:
Daniel Amundson

Project Director:
Richard Noyes

Research Assistants:
Margarida Yuan
Lawrence Helm

Production and Graphics:
Mary Carroll Gunning
Allison Schaengold

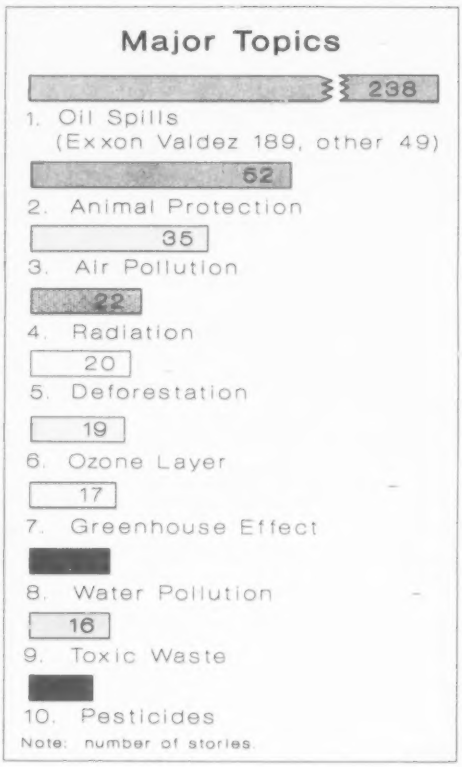
Public Affairs Director:
Toni Grueninger

***

The Whole Earth

To determine how the national media cover environmental news, we analyzed all stories on the television network evening news shows and in the major weekly news magazines during 1989. There was considerable variation in the amount of coverage at the different outlets. Among the networks, NBC devoted an hour more airtime than CBS did to environmental news [4 hours 58 minutes vs. 3 hours 57 minutes]. ABC finished just behind NBC with 4 hours 49 minutes. There was less difference in the number of stories. ABC ran 160, NBC 156, and CBS 137, bringing the total to 453 stories with a cumulative airtime of 13 hours 44 minutes.

Among the news magazines, *Time* made an institutional commitment to environmental news that included a New Year's cover story on the earth as its "Planet of the Year". This was reflected in *Time's* heavy coverage of environmental news - 73 stories, more than *Newsweek* [34] and *U.S. News* [35] combined. News magazine coverage totaled 3458 column inches, the equivalent of a magazine column running nearly the length of a football field [96 yards].



The Planet's Problems

For each story, we noted the topic that provided the primary focus of the report. Despite a wide variety of story topics that ranged from overpopulation to littering, oil spills formed the centerpiece of environmental news in 1989. This was particularly true for television, where oil spills provided the major focus for nearly half [47%] of all environmental stories. By contrast, they were the key focus of only 18% of news magazine stories. This topic was of particular interest to *Time*, which ran fifteen stories, compared to ten in *Newsweek* and *U.S. News* combined. The top ten topics:

1. There were more stories on **oil spills** (238) than on the next ten most heavily covered topics combined, including 189 stories devoted to the Exxon Valdez spill alone. Even if the Alaskan spill had not occurred, other oil spills would have been the second most heavily covered environmental story of 1989.

2. After oil spills, the most coverage went to **animal protection** [52 stories], including the plight of endangered species, the illegal killing of African elephants for their ivory tusks, and the over-harvesting of whales by hunters.

3. **Air pollution** [35 stories] focused on controversy over the Clean Air Act of 1989, along with continued concern over smog in such cities as Phoenix and Los Angeles.

4. Threats from **radiation** [22 stories] dealt with the leakage of radiation from nuclear weapons plants, commercial nuclear reactors, and nuclear-powered satellites.

5. News of **deforestation** [20 stories] often focused on the destruction of Brazilian rain forests.

6. Reports on the **ozone layer** [19 stories] dealt with the worries of scientists that a hole in the atmosphere's ozone layer will allow damaging radiation from the sun to reach Earth.

7. Coverage of the **greenhouse effect** [17 stories] dealt with arguments that a potential warming of the earth's climate is resulting from increased amounts of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere.

8. **Water pollution** [16 stories] included pollution of lakes, aquifers, rivers, and oceans by substances other than oil. This category also included news about the depletion of reservoirs and lakes and resulting water shortages.

9. News on **toxic waste** [16 stories] included problems of storing and disposing of toxic substances, and of cleaning up old dumpsites.

10. Reports on **pesticides and herbicides** [13 stories] discussed the associated risks of contaminating food, wildlife, and the natural environment.

A Stinking Mess

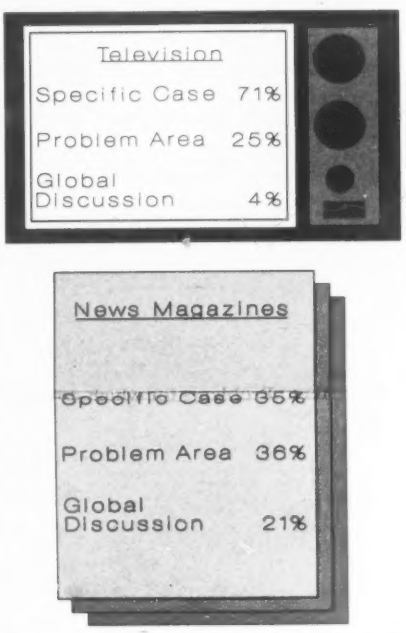
-*Time* headline
January 2, 1989

Levels of News

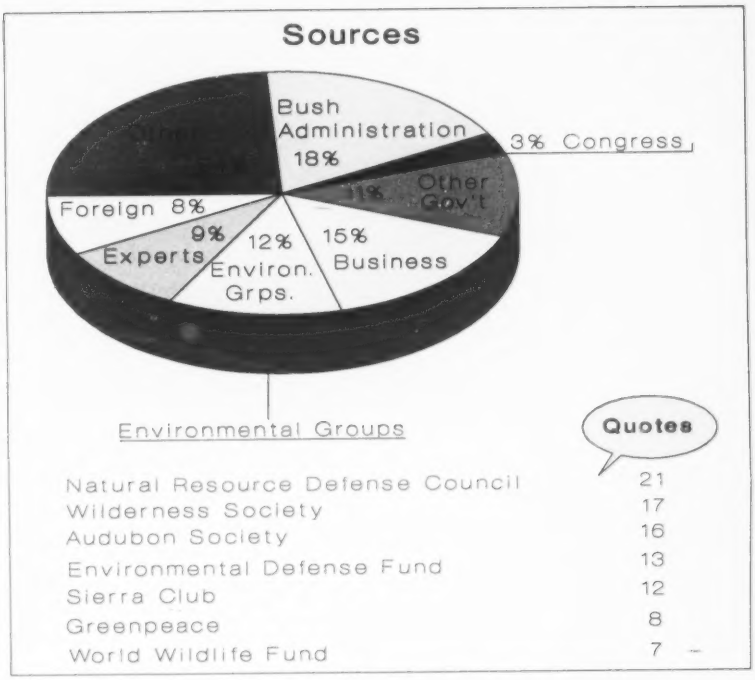
Not all environmental news was event driven. More than one third of the news stories [38%] transcended specific events to deal with general problem areas, e.g., dangers posed by low-level radiation, rather than an accident at a particular nuclear plant. In fact, one story in twelve [8%] was global in scope, dealing with a wide range of problems or general threats to "the environment".

Television news stuck to specific cases much more often than the news magazines. In fact, television dealt with particular instances proportionately twice as often as the magazines, whereas the print outlets were five times as likely to address global issues as was television. This sharp difference illustrates the more concrete focus of television on specific events accompanied by pictures.

Level of Discussion



Sources



Let Earth Have Its Day

-*Time* headline
December 18, 1989

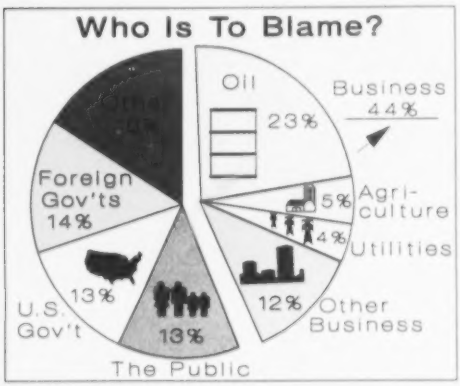
Voices on the Wilderness

Information and opinion was provided by a wide range of sources, from administration officials to citizens affected by industrial accidents. Overall government officials constituted nearly one third [32%] of all sources, including 18% from the federal executive branch alone. Other major sources included business [15%], environmental groups [12%], various "experts" [9%], and foreign sources [8%].

No one group spoke for the environmental movement. A variety of groups were frequently quoted, led by the Natural Resource Defense Council, Wilderness Society, Audubon Society, Environmental Defense Fund, and Sierra Club. Some groups made their media presence felt almost entirely on television, e.g., The Wilderness Society [15 of 17 citations] and Greenpeace [6 of 8]. By contrast, The World Wildlife Fund was quoted seven times in news magazines but never on television news. In keeping with its environmentalist orientation, *Time* quoted members of environmental groups almost as often [65 times] as the other two news magazines combined [73 quotes]. By contrast, the three television networks cited environmentalists with roughly equal frequency.

Laying Blame

Who is to blame for creating all these environmental problems? The leading miscreant in media reports was the business community. Business or corporations were cited for creating environmental problems more than three times as often as any other actor. In fact, business accounted for almost half (44%) of the 224 assessments of blame in the study. Not surprisingly, the oil industry accounted for a majority of the business community's citations -- 23% in all. Even without the contribution of the petroleum industry's spills and off-shore drilling, however, other industries -- led by agriculture and the electric utilities -- were collectively blamed more often than any other major actor.



For example, in a November 2 story on the need to recycle newspapers, ABC's Ned Potter concluded, "Who really has the power to solve the newspaper glut? Environmental groups say newspaper publishers. . . . But so far, the groups complain, they've been slow about it." This story also illustrates the principal sources of blame. Reporters themselves targeted the responsible parties in a majority of cases. Among sources, environmentalists most often assessed blame -- more than one charge in five, excluding those levelled by reporters.

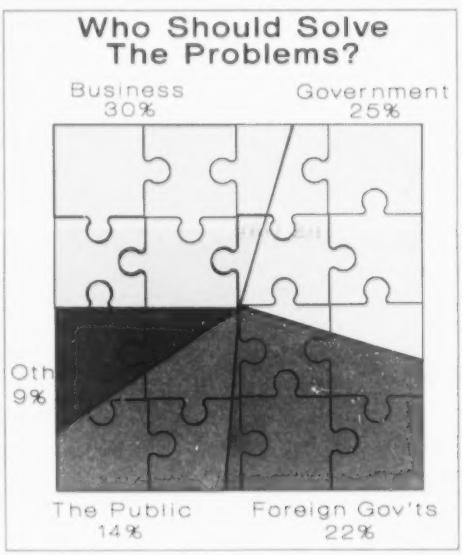
Among the remaining targets of criticism, blame was distributed about evenly among the federal government (13%), foreign governments (14%), and the general public (13%). Criticisms of the public played Pogo's refrain, "We have met the enemy and it is us." For example, *U.S. News* (10/2) quoted anthropologist Richard Leakey, "The only reason elephants are dying now is that Tom, Dick and Harry want to wear baubles and trinkets made of ivory."

Get Going Mr. Bush

-Time headline
December 18, 1989

Looking for Answers

Opinions about who should solve environmental problems were more evenly divided than assessments of who bears responsibility for them. Although business once again took the lead with 30% of all mentions, it was followed more closely by the federal government (25%), foreign governments (22%), and the public at large (14%). Thus, for example, where Richard Leakey blamed the public for the elephants' plight, a CBS story directed the search for solutions to the federal government. On February 16, Dan Rather reported that, "A coalition of wildlife groups today asked the U.S. government to take urgent action to save the African elephant. ... to ban imports of ivory and to declare the elephant an endangered species."



Problems which business was most often expected to solve included oil spills, air pollution, acid rain, toxic waste and other pesticide-related matters. Problems for which government solutions were mentioned most often included off-shore oil drilling, water pollution, the greenhouse effect and threats from radiation. Foreign governments were called upon most often to combat deforestation, protect endangered species, and overcome such challenges as ozone depletion and overpopulation.

Whether business or government was asked to help depended greatly on the type of source being quoted. Reporters, environmentalists, and Democrats mentioned government more often than business as a source of solutions for environmental problems. Industry

sources and members of the Bush administration cited business more often than government. Within the Bush administration, however, representatives of environmental agencies such as the EPA and OSHA looked to business and government with about equal frequency.

Positive Ratings (%)

Business		Government	
ABC	21%	ABC	48%
CBS	17%	CBS	48%
NBC	14%	NBC	30%
Time	24%	*Time*	38%
Newsweek	28%	*Newsweek*	20%
U.S. News	25%	*U.S. News*	8%
Total	18% n=202	Total	28% n=134

Note: percent of positive assessments.

Scoreboard

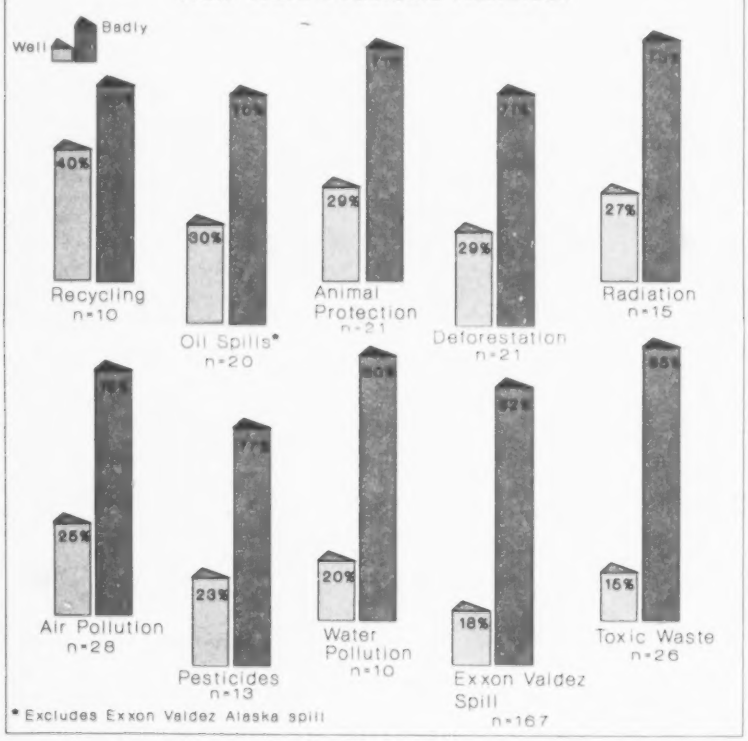
Beyond assessing responsibility for creating or solving environmental problems, we noted every evaluation of how individuals, groups, or nations handled environmental issues. Nearly 80% of the 423 evaluations were directed at either business or government. The vast majority of these were negative.

Evaluations of business ran more than 4 to 1 negative, including a 3 to 1 margin on television and 5 to 1 at the news magazines. There was little variation across news organizations, with positive assessments ranging from a low of 14% at NBC to a high of 28% at *Newsweek*. For example, a *Newsweek* reporter called the Exxon Valdez oil spill "an accident that, through mind-boggling ineptitude, went from serious to catastrophic." (4/10) And on CBS (2/11), an opponent of offshore oil drilling complained, "the destruction of a myriad species...in order for a few already too rich white men to get richer is not going to happen here!"

Most of the positive judgments of business were expressed either by corporate spokesmen or members of the Bush administration. The praise also tended to be milder than the condemnations. For example, CBS's Wyatt Andrews reported on the Alaskan spill, "(Transportation Secretary) Skinner actually defended Exxon, saying the company wasn't organized until Monday but was running things well now." (3/30) Although the Exxon Valdez spill attracted the most criticism, business fared no better in its ratings on other environmental issues. Evaluations of Exxon's role in the Alaskan spill were 82% negative, the same rating accorded to business across all other environmental issues.

The media also turned thumbs down on government efforts to deal with environmental issues, although the marks were not as low as those handed out to business. The ratings spread across news organizations was also much greater. Among the networks, opinion on government's role was almost evenly divided at ABC (48% positive vs. 52% negative) but 4 to 1 negative (21% positive) at CBS. At the news magazines, evaluations ranged from a high of 38% positive at *Time* to a mere 8% positive (a 12 to 1 negative ratio) at *U.S. News*. For example, the October 23 *U.S. News* criticized government oversight of nuclear weapons plants: "Government officials simply ignored early warnings of dangerous pollution from surveyors and consultants..." One of the most colorful defenses of government's role came from a Bush campaign pledge rebroad-

How Were Problems Handled?



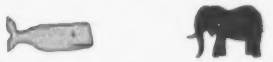
* Excludes Exxon Valdez Alaska spill

cast on ABC (12/27): "Those who say we're powerless to do anything about the greenhouse effect are forgetting about the White House effect."

Overall these two institutions fared quite differently in print and broadcast news. News magazines were about equally negative toward business and government (25% vs. 22% positive ratings respectively). By contrast, all three networks rated government's response to environmental problems more positively than that of business. Their combined ratings were nearly twice as high for government (31% positive) as for business (17% positive).

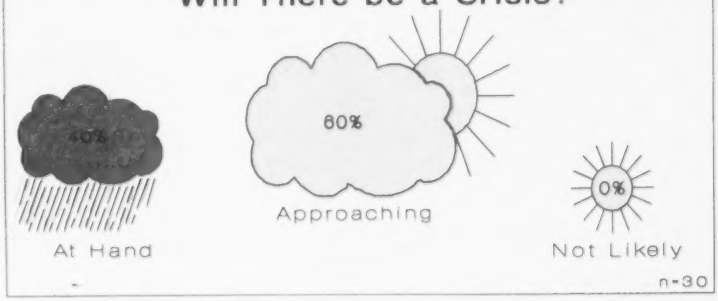
The failing grades meted out to government and business reflected more general criticism over the handling of virtually all environmental issues. Regardless of the groups or institutions involved, the handling of virtually every issue received far more criticism than praise. Negative ratings predominated by margins ranging from 2 to 1 to 6 to 1 on such issues as oil spills, animal protection, threats from radiation, air and water pollution, pesticides, and deforestation. The worst ratings were reserved for the problems of toxic waste (only 15% positive comments). The only topic that generated more praise than criticism was recycling, a measure that was rarely evaluated.

Animal Stories



1.	Otters	47
2.	Shellfish	27
3.	Whales	26
4.	Seals	24
5.	Eagles	23
6.	Elephants	19
7.	Ducks	17
8.	Sea Lions	16
9.	Bears	14
10.	Owls	12

Will There be a Crisis?



Crisis Coverage

Do our environmental difficulties constitute a crisis? Is such a crisis at hand, or is one imminent? Or are such fears overstated? This issue was resolved decisively in favor of the pessimists. Among those who raised the specter of an environmental crisis, 40% argued that the crisis was at hand, and the other 60% saw one approaching. No source or reporter raised doubts over the inevitability of a crisis.

Cries of "crisis!" were often accompanied by calls for action. For example, on January 2, *Time* argued, "If the nations of the world take immediate action, the destruction of the global environment can be slowed substantially, but some irreversible damage is inevitable." Nearly a year later (12/18), *Time* reiterated, "The planet is in trouble. If nations do not take drastic action, it could one day be unfit as a human habitat."

Featured Creatures

This planet provides a habitat for many species, but some were in the news more than others. The most newsworthy animal by far was the otter, mentioned in 47 stories. Of those in the top ten, otters, shellfish, seals, eagles, and sea lions were among the creatures affected by oil spills. Whales have been a species long threatened by over-harvesting, especially by Japan. Elephants are a more recent concern, spurred by the devastating effects of poaching.

Joke Watch

Environmental issues were the leading source of topical humor on TV's late-night talk shows in 1989. We logged 192 jokes on the environment from the monologues of Johnny Carson, Jay Leno, and David Letterman. Exxon was the principal target of their ridicule. By comparison, they aimed 143 jokes at George Bush and 135 at Dan Quayle. Samples: "Scientists say there is a big black ring around (Neptune). That means Exxon must have been there." (Leno, 8/4) "They started spraying malathion last night, and the air quality in L.A. improved dramatically." (Carson, 11/6) "Exxon has now abruptly stopped its Alaskan cleanup. Gee, wouldn't it be too bad if Americans abruptly stopped buying Exxon gas?" (Letterman, 9/8)

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UNO Is Number One

Media Coverage of the Nicaraguan Elections

How did our national media cover the Nicaraguan elections that ended in UNO's surprise victory on February 25? To find out we examined news and opinion pieces in major newspapers, news magazines, and television broadcasts from February 1 through March 31. This period included the final month of campaigning, the election, and the transfer of power that followed. We analyzed 306 news items, including 32 opinion pieces, from ten media outlets: 193 articles in the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *Washington Times*, and *Wall Street Journal*; 16 stories in *Time*, *Newsweek*, and *US News and World Report*; and 74 stories (1 hour 55 minutes of airtime) on the ABC, CBS, and NBC evening newscasts.

Major findings:

Media Monitor (Copyright 1990) is published ten times a year by the Center for Media and Public Affairs, a nonpartisan and nonprofit research organization. The Center conducts scientific studies of how the media treat social and political issues.

Editors:
Dr. S. Robert Lichter
Dr. Linda S. Lichter

Research Director:
Daniel Amundson

Research Assistants
Colin Stephens
Carl Lichvarcik

Production and Graphics
Mary Carroll Gunning
Allison Schaengold

Public Affairs Director:
Toni Grueninger

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- The Sandinistas got nearly twice as much good press as UNO (43% to 24%) in news stories, though negative evaluations dominated overall. *Page 3*

- Evaluations of the Sandinistas varied sharply, from 70% good press on TV news to 52% in the *New York Times*, 25% in the *Washington Post*, and only 11% at the news magazines. *Page 4*

- Eight out of every nine opinion polls cited favored the Sandinistas. Overall, horse race news was 92% positive for the Sandinistas but only 40% positive for UNO. *Page 4*

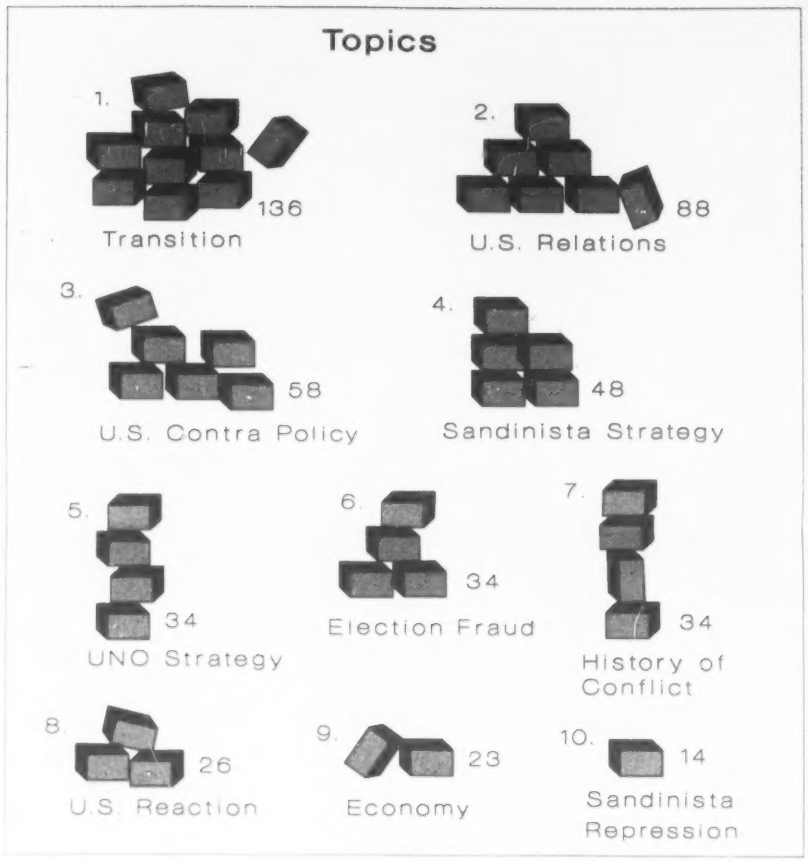
- UNO's victory was usually attributed to either U.S. or Sandinista policies. Even after the election, most sources were more sanguine about the FSLN's future prospects then about UNO's. *Page 6*

- Nearly two out of three sources criticized the Reagan-Bush policies toward Nicaragua. But assessments became more positive after election day. *Page 6*

The Nicaraguan Vote

We analyzed media coverage of the Nicaraguan elections from February 1 through March 31, 1990. This covered the most heated period of campaigning as well as the transfer of power after election day (February 25). We examined all related stories and opinion pieces from the *Washington Post*, *New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, *Washington Times*, *Time*, *Newsweek*, *U.S. News and World Report*, and the ABC, CBS and NBC evening newscasts.

These ten outlets ran 306 news items, including 274 news stories and 32 opinion pieces, during the eight weeks of the study. The *New York Times* printed the greatest number, with 79 items, followed by the *Washington Post* (58), the *Washington Times* (56), and the *Wall Street Journal* (23). The news magazines printed a combined total of 16 stories. *Time* and *U.S. News* each ran six stories; *Newsweek* trailed with four. The three television networks collectively aired 74 stories. NBC broadcast the greatest number (29); ABC followed with 23 and CBS with 22. Despite the similar numbers of stories, however, NBC devoted by far the most airtime to the Nicaragua elections. NBC's 50 minutes of coverage nearly equalled the combined totals of ABC (33 minutes) and CBS (32 minutes).



A Tale of Two Countries

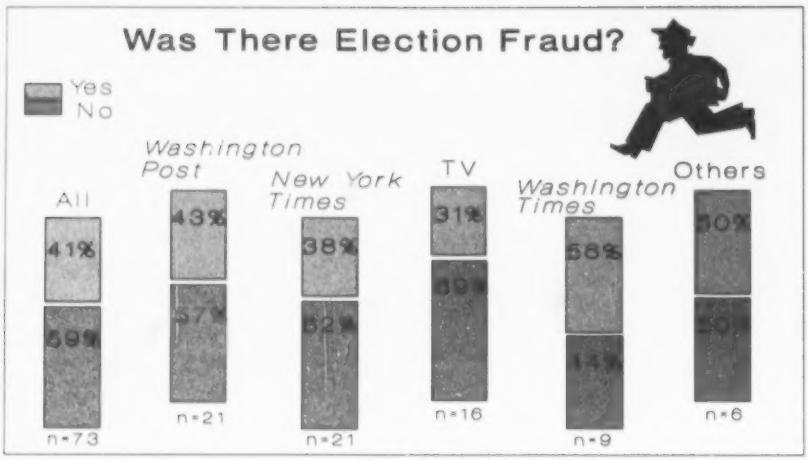
The most frequently discussed topic was the transfer of power. The negotiations and agreements struck to transfer power from the Sandinistas to UNO (the National Opposition Union) were brought up in 136 stories. Other news of Nicaragua was closely intertwined with American foreign policy. Thus, U.S. relations with Nicaragua (88) and policies regarding the contras (58) ranked second and third. The next three most popular topics were all related directly to the election itself. Electoral strategies of the Sandinistas were covered in 48 stories; those of UNO were mentioned in 34. Concern over fraud in the election was the topic of another 34 stories. Thirty-four stories also tried to present some historical context for the conflict in Nicaragua, most often by discussing the backgrounds of Daniel Ortega and Violeta Chamorro. United States reaction to the elections (26), problems of the Nicaraguan economy (23), and tales of Sandinista repression (14) rounded out the top ten.

Sources

U.S. Government	341
Administration	(244)
Congress	(97)
Sandinistas	337
UNO	315
Contras	101
Other Nicaraguans	98
International Observers	96
Diplomats	58
Polls	36
Media	32
Latin American Governments	22

Three Part Harmony

Our analysis identified 1633 sources in stories about the Nicaraguan elections. Three voices dominated the debate in roughly equal measure -- the United States, the Sandinistas, and UNO. The largest group of sources came from the U.S. government, which accounted for 341 citations (21 percent of all sources). The Bush administration accounted for 244, while Congress added the other 97. The Sandinista government and its supporters were the second largest group



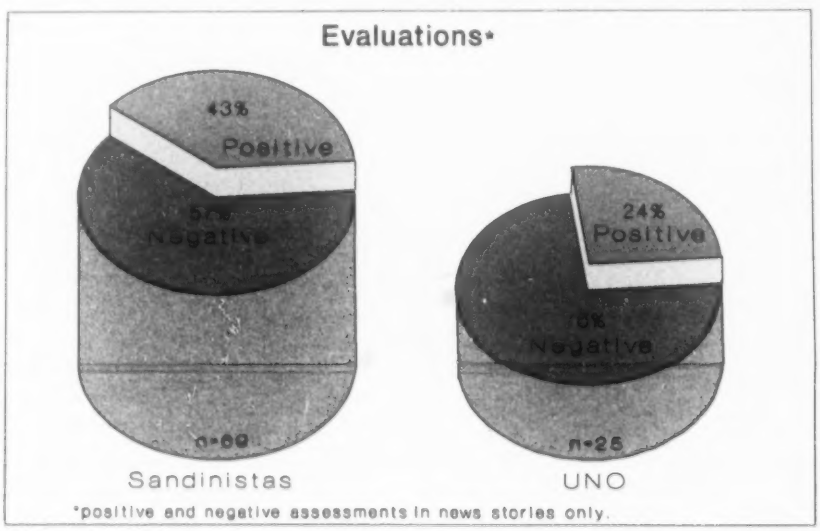
with 337 mentions. UNO and its supporters were close behind with 315 citations. The contras headed a second tier of sources with 101 citations, slightly ahead of ordinary or politically unaffiliated Nicaraguans, who appeared 98 times. International observers, including Jimmy Carter, accounted for another 96 source citations. Diplomats (58), polls (36), the media e.g. *La Prensa* (32), and other Latin American governments (22) completed the top ten source groups. Among individuals, Daniel Ortega placed first with 90 appearances. His opponent Violeta Chamorro managed only half that number (45), which nonetheless placed her second in the source derby. In third place was Jimmy Carter, who was cited in 30 stories. President Bush was quoted in 29 stories, and Secretary of State James Baker was fifth with 12 citations.

A Stolen Election?

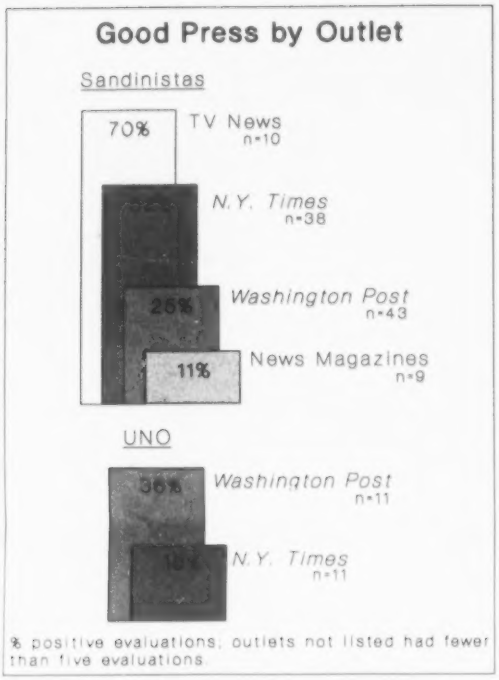
One of the major issues in the campaign was the possibility of election fraud. Most discussions of fraud focused on whether, when, or how the Sandinistas might tamper with the election results. Our analysis identified 73 statements on election fraud. The majority (59 percent) denied that either side acted fraudulently. One in three sources (33 percent) accused the Sandinistas of fraud, compared to only 8 percent who directed their accusations against UNO. For instance, a *Washington Times* reporter observed, "Almost everyone except the government and its most ardent supporters agrees that the process has been flawed in a number of ways, ranging from intimidation of candidates and campaign workers to unequal distribution of state television time." (2/23)

Heros and Villains

We noted all assessments of both sides in the election, including evaluations of the two parties and the individuals associated with them. Dimensions on which the contenders were rated included job performance, policy issues, campaign abilities, etc., excluding assessments of the horse race (see below). Opinions were largely negative on the merits of both the Sandinistas and UNO, although the FSLN fared better. Out of 94 evaluations in news stories, the Sandinistas weighed in at 43% good press, compared to only 24% for UNO. But the governing party's margin was somewhat offset by several negative opinion articles. When these were added, the FSLN total dropped to 35% good press and UNO rose slightly to 26%.



The Sandinistas were faulted repeatedly for their past performance, as evidenced by the failing Nicaraguan economy. For example, *Time*'s Johanna McGeary concluded, "That the Sandinistas lost should not be so surprising. They had thoroughly mismanaged an economy that was one of Central America's most prosperous when the FSLN took power in 1979." (3/12) By contrast, they received generally high



marks for their campaign, which was seen as slick, professional and thorough. The UNO leadership, on the other hand, was criticized for a poor campaign performance, Mrs. Chamorro's lack of familiarity with the issues, and even the lack of a clear platform. *Wall Street Journal* reporter David Asman summed up these charges, "Mrs. Chamorro and her UNO confederates are neither skillful politicians nor well versed in policy issues." (2/22)

There were substantial differences in how the various news outlets rated the two contenders. Most evaluations appeared in only two outlets, the *New York Times* (38) and *Washington Post* (43). But these two newspapers differed sharply in the direction of their assessments. In the pages of the *Times*, evaluations of the Sandinistas were about evenly balanced (52% positive vs. 48% negative) while ratings of UNO were more than four to one negative (only 18% positive). UNO fared better in the *Post*, although the coverage there focused mainly on shortcomings in both parties. The *Post* gave only 25 percent positive ratings to the Sandinistas and 36 percent positive to UNO. No other outlet offered more than one or two evaluations of UNO. But the Sandinistas elicited sharply different portrayals at the networks and the news magazines. On television news, seven out of 10 evaluations of the Sandinistas were favorable; in the magazines, eight out of nine comments were unfavorable.

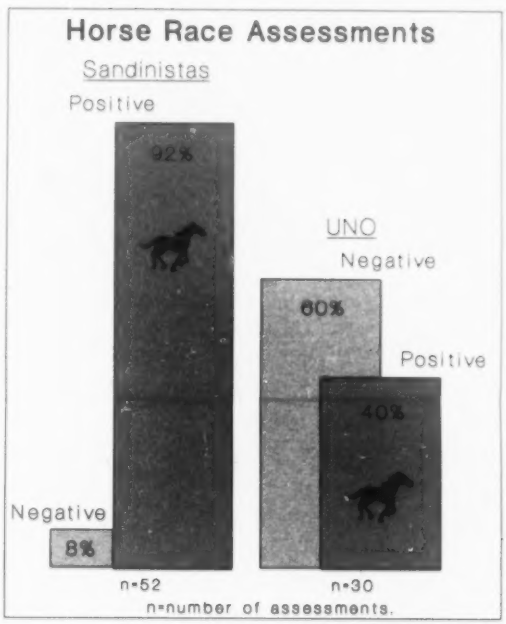
The Republican record in the 1980's is too grim to mention... When it comes to Nicaragua, the White House Republicans are, in short, a natural disaster, like an eighty year old earthquake.

-Paul Berman
Op-ed piece
New York Times
2/28

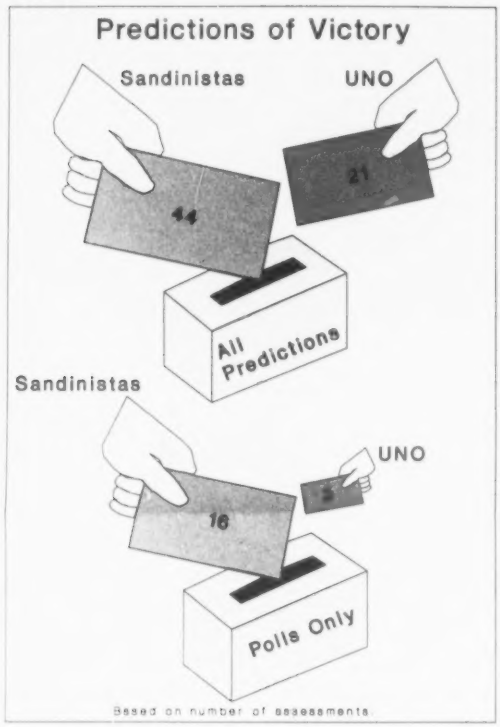
Thus, portrayals of the Sandinistas differed dramatically among national media outlets, ranging from better than two-to-one positive ratings on TV news (70%) to balanced coverage at the *New York Times* (52% positive), three to one negative (25% positive) at the *Washington Post*, and only 11 percent positive at the news magazines. UNO, by contrast, received predominantly negative ratings at both the *Times* and the *Post* and almost no ratings elsewhere.

Calling the Race

As in U.S. election news, a major portion of the coverage focused on the horse race. Handicapping the race (judgments of who is ahead and by how much) made up a significant part of the campaign coverage. When the media judged the horse race position of the two parties, the Sandinistas came out far ahead. Of the 52 horse race assessments of the Sandinista campaign, 92 percent were positive. By contrast, assessments of the UNO campaign found it wanting. Out of 30 evaluations of its electoral potential, 60 percent were negative. Reporters themselves were avid handicappers of the race, delivering 70 percent of all horse race assessments. Reporter assessments did not differ significantly from the opinions of sources quoted in their stories.



The strong Sandinista party organization, its ability to outspend the opposition, and its strong position in the polls accounted for most of the FSLN's positive evaluations. For instance, Lee Hockstader of the *Washington Post* (2/25) noted, "The Sandinistas...have managed to present themselves...as hip young populists who



understand what the people want." UNO was frequently faulted for poor organization, scant financing and bad poll placement. Robert Greenberger in the *Wall Street Journal* wrote, "The opposition party...has little organization in the town and nothing to give its residents besides promises." (2/22)

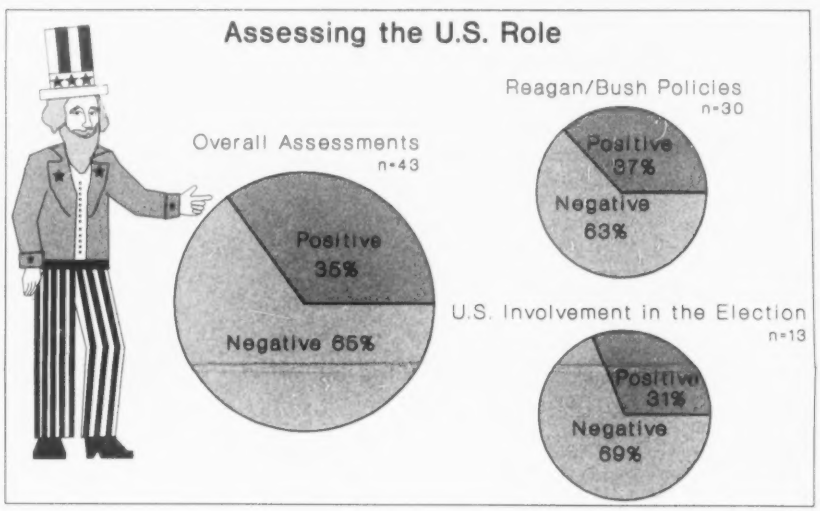
The Sandinistas' advantage in horse race judgments extended from assessments of their campaign to predictions of the eventual outcome. The coverage included 68 predictions of the election results. Of these, 60 percent favored the Sandinistas, 31 percent placed their money on UNO, and 9 percent argued that the Sandinistas would keep power regardless of the vote count. Most predictions of victory came from representatives of the two parties. But the Sandinistas also had a big edge in polling projections. Of the 18 occassions where opinion polls were cited to predict the outcome, 16 (89%) favored the Sandinistas. Ironically, there was little discussion of the problems involved in polling Nicaraguans. Potential flaws in the polling process were mentioned in fewer than half (47 percent) of the cases where polls were cited.

The election shows that the romanticism of violent revolution has long passed.

-Diplomat
Quoted in *New York Times* 2/27

UNO's Success Story

Once the votes were tallied, the media tried to explain UNO's surprise victory. Out of 98 explanations offered, nearly half (43%) linked UNO's success to U.S. actions or policies. The same number listed Sandinista actions or policies. Thus, UNO's own characteristics or accomplishments were credited for their success in only one of every seven explanations (14%). The most frequently cited explanation (20 mentions) was the failure of the Nicaraguan economy. U.S. support for the contras was credited in 19 stories, while other hard line policies of the Reagan and Bush administrations were cited in 17 stories. The failure of Nicaraguan communism to deliver the type of society promised was mentioned in eight stories. Anger and resentment over government policies (particularly the draft) was credited in eight stories. The popularity of Violeta Chamorro (7), Sandinista intimidation of voters (6) and fear of U.S. reprisals for electing the Sandinistas (6) completed the of most frequently heard explanations.

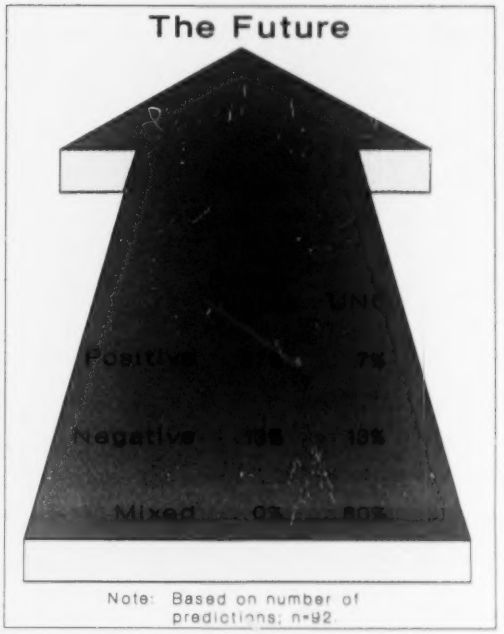


Yankee Go Home

American policy toward Nicaragua also came under review. On the specific issue of U.S. involvement in this election, 69 percent of sources expressed some criticism. Most argued that the U.S. was too involved in the

election and may have flawed the process or turned Chamorro into a puppet. For example, *Washington Post* reporter Richard Morin argued (2/21) that United States funding, "may have done little more than deepen voter suspicions about Chamarro's dependence on Washington." A few asserted that the U.S. missed an opportunity in the election, responding too late with too little assistance to insure UNO a fair chance at victory.

The broader policies toward Nicaragua undertaken by Presidents Reagan and Bush also evoked mainly disapproval, by 63 percent negative to 37 percent positve. For example, *Washington Post* reporter Haynes Johnson argued in a signed column, "The guerrillas [the contras] are an attempt to achieve in private what the United States was not willing to attempt to gain in public. As such, they represented another departure from America's founding principles. From defender of revolutions, Cold War America became defender of oligarchs and covert forces." (3/2) Opinion on the policies of the Reagan and Bush administrations underwent a rehabilitation after the votes were counted. Prior to election day every assessment of Reagan-Bush policies was negative. After the voting, opinion was split almost evenly (46 percent positive vs. 54 percent negative).



Among those who offered predictions about the future course of U.S. relations with Nicaragua, 85 percent saw an improving picture. Most of these predictions were made by U.S. officials who foresaw the lifting of trade sanctions and the extension of U.S. aid to the new government. Only one source (2%) foresaw deteriorating relations with Nicaragua; the remaining 13 percent predicted little change in our ties with Nicaragua.

After the Revolution

Once the votes were tallied, media attention turned to post-election prospects. Eighty-seven percent of sources felt that the Sandinistas would remain a viable force in Nicaraguan politics, compared to only 13 percent who argued that they would be weakened by their loss. UNO's prospects were seen as more clouded. Out of 46 discussions of UNO's future, only seven percent saw unqualified success for the party, and 13 percent were equally confident of its failure. Most of those voicing opinions (80%) felt that UNO could only be successful if certain qualifications could be met. One in four (24%) cited Sandinista cooperation as the prerequisite for UNO's success. The majority (56%), however, identified such external factors as U.S. aid, contra demobilization, and Latin American support.

The opposition has failed to excite the voters with a reasonable alternative... And the opposition has from the beginning been plagued by internal conflicts and poor organization.

-Ralph I. Fine
Op-ed piece
New York Times
2/21

Opinion Watch

There were 32 opinion pieces (editorials and signed columns) in the sample. The largest number (12) appeared in the *Washington Times*. The *New York Times* followed with eight, the *Washington Post* with six and the *Wall Street Journal* with four. *Time* and *Newsweek* each ran one column on the elections. In most cases opinion pieces added little to the discussion beyond reinforcing the perspectives offered in news stories. For example, most columnists predicted a Sandinista victory. In a few areas, however, opinion pieces contradicted the tone of straight news accounts. First, news stories were three to one negative in assessing Reagan/Bush policies, while opinion pieces ran three-to-two positive. Second, 61 percent of the discussions of election fraud in news stories exonerated the electoral process, while 71 percent of the judgments in opinion pieces argued that there was indeed fraud. The *Wall Street Journal* and *Washington Times* were the most skeptical. Finally, opinion pieces differed from news stories in their assessments of the Sandinistas. Their evaluations in news stories were 43 percent positive. In opinion pieces, the FSLN received nine negative appraisals and not a single positive one.

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Gorbachev's Falling Star

TV News Coverage of the Washington Summit

How did the television networks cover the recent Washington summit between Presidents Bush and Gorbachev? We analyzed all stories dealing with the summit that appeared on the ABC, CBS, and NBC evening newscasts. They broadcast 165 stories on the summit with a total airtime of five hours, forty-five minutes. We compared the results to our studies of the three previous summits in Malta (1989), Moscow (1988), and Washington (1987).

Major findings:

■ **War of Words**--Mikhail Gorbachev was quoted in nearly twice as many news stories as George Bush (61 to 35). Boris Yeltsin finished third (16 stories). *Page 2*

■ **Falling Star**--Gorbachev received only 46% positive evaluations, far worse than at any previous summit. Most of the negative evaluations dealt with his political status at home. *Page 3*

■ **Winning Friends**--American government sources were 100% positive in rating Gorbachev. But Soviet sources were only 30% positive, and American reporters only 24% positive. *Page 3*

■ **Home-Front Focus**--The media focused on Gorbachev's domestic situation far more often than at any previous summit. The Soviet economy and the crisis in the Baltics led the coverage. *Page 4*

■ **Goodbye Gorby?**--Speculation about the Soviet Union's future centered mainly on the possibility of Gorbachev's ouster. Domestic violence or chaos was also frequently mentioned. *Page 4*

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Editors:
Dr. S. Robert Lichter
Dr. Linda S. Lichter

Research Director:
Daniel Amundson

Project Director:
Richard Noyes

Research Assistants
Tim McLaughlin
Swain Wood

Production and Graphics
Mary Carroll Gunning
Allison Schaengold

Public Affairs Director:
Toni Mann

***

Timely Summit

From May 23 to June 5, the networks ran 165 summit-related stories, with a total airtime of five hours, forty-five minutes. CBS ran the most stories (66) and devoted the most airtime to the summit (2 hours 8 minutes). NBC was second with 53 stories totaling 1 hour 59 minutes, while ABC aired just 46 stories and 1 hour 38 minutes.

The total of 165 summit stories is nearly double the 88 stories prompted by last year's Malta summit, but nearly identical to the number of stories we logged at earlier summits. Gorbachev's trip to Washington in 1987 occasioned 168 news items on the networks, while Reagan's 1988 visit to Moscow brought 174 stories.

Summit Smorgasbord

Unlike previous summits, where the emphasis was exclusively on bilateral issues such as arms control and trade, at this summit the press gave significant attention to Gorbachev's domestic situation as well. The top issues were the Soviet economy and the crisis surrounding the Baltic states. Each was mentioned in 54 summit stories. Discussions of the desperate state of the Soviet economy were most in evidence in the days before Gorbachev's U.S. arrival, while the Baltic crisis remained a point of contention throughout the summit.

Then...

He's already established himself as a shrewd political chess player, and Mr. Gorbachev's best years are still ahead of him.

--Walter Rodgers
ABC
12/4/87

...And Now.

Never before has a U.S. President laid out a redder carpet for a Soviet leader. Never has a Soviet leader needed one so badly.

--Dan Rather
CBS
5/31/90

U.S. trade with the Soviets was mentioned in 52 stories, most centering on speculation about whether or not Bush would recommend granting "Most Favored Nation" status to the Soviets. German reunification came up in 49 stories, as did more general references to relations between the U.S. and the Soviets.

Discussions of domestic politics in the Soviet Union (mostly centering on the election of Boris Yeltsin as president of the Russian Federation) and speculation over Gorbachev's political survival were also topics of frequent discussion. The prominence of these issues is in sharp contrast to previous summits, which saw little doubt expressed about the political health of the Soviet leader.

Amount of Coverage

	'87	'88	'89	'90
Gorbachev	44	31	64	61
Reagan	40	38	—	—
Bush	—	—	58	35

Note: Number of appearances as a source.

Speaking Their Peace

Presidents Bush and Gorbachev had much to say to each other at their White House meetings, but Gorbachev had more to say to the media. The Soviet leader was quoted nearly twice as often as his American counterpart--61 to 35. During other recent summits, the U.S. and Soviet leaders were quoted in nearly identical numbers of stories. The major voice of dissent heard at the summit was that of Boris Yeltsin. He was quoted in 16 summit stories, more than any other individual besides the two presidents. In comparison, U.S. Secretary of State Baker was quoted only 11 times, and his Soviet counterpart, Eduard Shevardnadze, was heard from only once.

Battle of the Presidents

This summit marked the first meeting between the U.S. and Soviet leaders in which the networks treated Gorbachev less favorably than the U.S. President. Gorbachev received 36 positive evaluations, and 42 negative evaluations, for a score of only 46% positive press. (In calculating positive press, we consider only clearly positive and clearly negative source statements). ABC aired a typical negative comment on May 26, when Moscow correspondent Jim Laurie quoted Boris Yeltsin, who denounced Gorbachev for his "go-slow policy" on economic reform.

Never before had Gorbachev been treated so badly by the U.S. networks. At the Malta summit last December, there were no negative comments to be heard about the Soviet leader, leaving him with 100% positive press. At his earlier summits with Reagan, Gorbachev's press was nearly as dazzling. In Washington in 1987, Gorbachev had a positive rating of 79%; in Moscow the following year, he scored 76% positive.

American presidents, in contrast, have never had it so good in the Gorbachev era. Reagan received mostly bad press during the Washington and Moscow meetings. Bush, who received positive ratings at Malta, was nonetheless eclipsed by Gorbachev. At this summit, however, Bush's 68% positive rating made him the first U.S. President to best the Soviet "Great Communicator".

Evaluations of Gorbachev (% positive)

Network

	% Pos	n
ABC	46%	26
CBS	57%	21
NBC	39%	31

Topic

	% Pos	n
Political Status	35%	48
Job Performance	53%	15
Other	73%	15

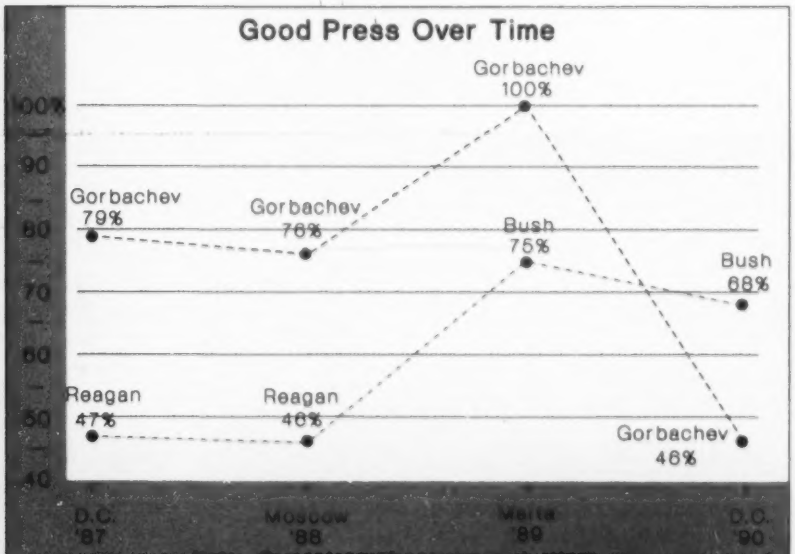
Sources

	% Pos	n
USA	92%	24
Soviet	30%	20
Reporter	24%	34

Time

	% Pos	n
Before Arrival (5/25 - 5/29)	34%	38
While in USA (5/30 - 6/5)	58%	40

Note: Based on clearly positive and negative evaluations; n = number of evaluations.



Cracks in the Armor

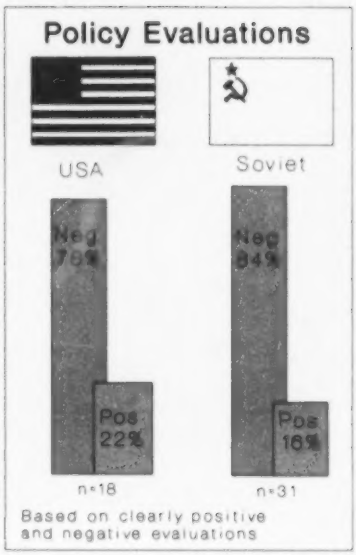
Gorbachev's negative press was due mainly to pessimism about his political standing at home. Two out of every three statements about his political status were negative. He received mainly positive marks in every other category, including his job performance. Reporters were the main commentators on this issue, and their fixation with the question of Gorbachev's survival accounts for the low ratings of the Soviet leader.

Gorbachev's best press occurred while he was in the United States. Three out of every five sources praised him after his arrival on May 30. During the pre-summit coverage, two out of three evaluations were negative. Aside from reporters, American sources were almost unanimous in praising the Soviet president, giving him 92% positive rating (including 100% positive from government sources). Soviet sources, in contrast, were only 30% positive, reflecting heavy coverage of Yeltsin's criticism. American reporters were even more critical -- only 24% positive. Ironically, Gorbachev's media image was polished mainly by U.S. government sources and tarnished most often by Soviet citizens and American reporters.

Policy Failures

The media treated the superpowers' policy stands more harshly than their leaders. Both the American and Soviet governments received mainly negative marks for their handling of policy issues. The U.S. came out slightly ahead, with 22% positive evaluations, compared to the Soviet Union's 16%. The U.S. side was criticized extensively for its December invasion of Panama, which the Soviets contrasted to their "restrained" approach to Lithuania. The U.S. was also criticized for its handling of the German question, its restrictions on Jewish immigration, and for granting "Most Favored Nation" status to China, despite the massacre of students in Tienanmen Square last June.

Nearly half of all evaluations of the Soviet government concerned the economy. On the eve of the summit, NBC's Tom Brokaw remarked that "the Soviet economy is in a real mess." A Soviet woman complained on CBS that, "there is nothing a simple working person can do to protect themselves against [Gorbachev's] rise in prices." The lone defense of the Soviet's economic policy was provided by Soviet Prime Minister Ryzhkov, who insisted that his plan would work.

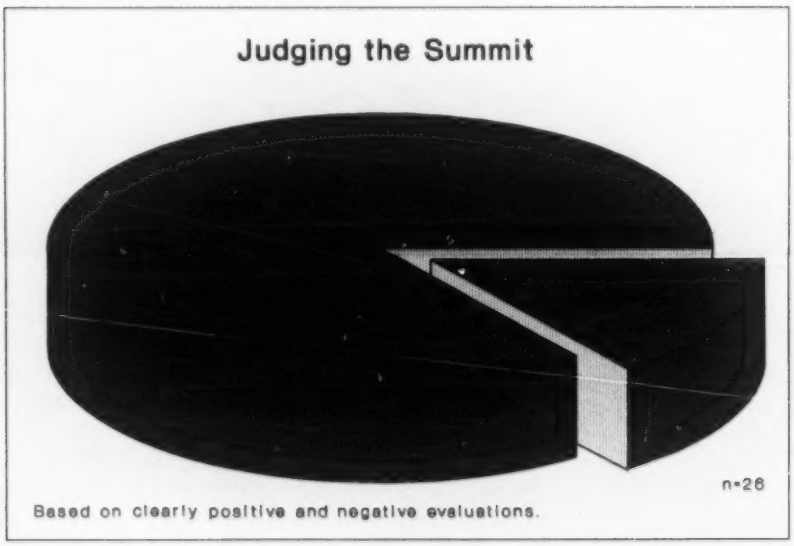


Summit Successes

Despite all the bad news about the Soviet Union, the summit itself was portrayed as a resounding success. Out of 26 assessments of the summit's outcome, the vast majority (85%) were positive. The source who most frequently expressed satisfaction with the summit was none other than Mikhail Gorbachev. He was seconded by Soviet Foreign Ministry official Vitaly Churkin, who declared on Friday that the meeting "turned out to be a very successful summit indeed. All of the agreements which could possibly be signed at this summit are being signed at this moment."

Future Shocks

Despite the glow of a successful summit, many of the stories also discussed the shaky state of the Soviet empire and its future prospects. The possibility most often raised by news sources was Gorbachev's ouster, which was mentioned 12 times in 14 days. Other possible scenarios involved chaos and violence, notably mentions of a civil war and general anarchy (6 mentions) and the break-up of the Soviet Union (2 mentions). Only three sources discussed the possibility that the current package of reforms might succeed in improving Soviet life.



Future Scenarios
Reforms Succeed 3
Gorbachev Ousted 12
End of USSR 2
Violence, Chaos 6
Note: Number of stories raising each as a possibility.

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R3823-1
Persian Gulf Crisis
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Volume IV Number 7 August/September 1990

The Battle Against Apartheid

Media Coverage of South Africa 1989-90

How have the American media covered the struggle against apartheid in South Africa? To find out we analyzed nearly a thousand news items from July 1989 through June 1990, including 407 reports on the ABC, NBC, and CBS evening newscasts, and 559 news stories and editorials in the *Washington Post* and the *Washington Times*. We also compared the news during Nelson Mandela's U.S. and world tour with earlier patterns of coverage.

Major findings:

- **Cheers & Jeers** - On TV news, Nelson Mandela's press was five-to-one positive; South African President F.W. de Klerk's was almost two-to-one negative. *Page 4*

- **Victory Tour** - During Mandela's June tour, approval for sanctions rose, but his personal evaluations worsened. *Page 5*

- **Video Violence** - On TV news, NBC aired the most reports on police violence and the fewest reports on opposition violence. *Page 3*

- **Split Screen** - Most sources supported foreign sanctions and de Klerk's reforms; but majorities in the *Washington Times* opposed both. *Page 4*

- The Middle East - The crisis consumed 73% of the network evening newscasts. Oil price rises got as much coverage as the plight of captive foreigners in Iraq and Kuwait. *Page 6*

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In the News

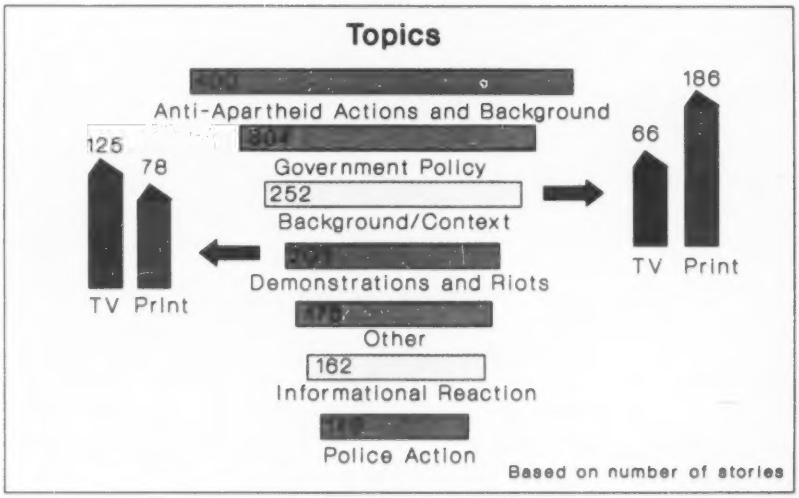
To examine how the American media portrayed the racial crisis in South Africa, we analyzed coverage of that country from July 1, 1989 through March 31, 1990. This period began with a worsening governmental crisis included the resignation of then-President P.W. Botha and the election of F.W. de Klerk, the release of Nelson Mandela from prison and legalization of the African National Congress (ANC).

Researchers analyzed 341 stories broadcast on the three network evening newscasts, totalling 8 hours 20 minutes of airtime. NBC's 133 stories (3 hrs. 16 min.) topped both competitors, as ABC aired 111 (2 hrs. 44 min.) and CBS 97 (2 hrs. 20 min.). We also analyzed 213 articles (both news and editorials) in the *Washington Post* and 200 in the *Washington Times*.

We conducted a follow-up study of South African news during June 1990, to assess the impact of Mandela's heavily covered U.S. tour. The same five outlets ran 212 stories on South Africa in that one month alone. ABC aired 27 stories (32 min 12 sec.), followed by NBC with 22 (33 min. 54 sec.) and CBS with 17 (26 min. 54 sec.) for a total of 66 stories and one hour 33 minutes of airtime. The *Washington Post* ran 87 articles, while the *Washington Times* printed 59.

cluded church leaders such as Bishop Desmond Tutu and the Rev. Allan Boesak, African National Congress (ANC) leaders like Nelson Mandela and Walter Sisulu, and ordinary demonstrators and protesters.

Opposition sources were seen and heard most frequently on television, where they accounted for 36 percent of all sources, compared to only 17 percent official government sources. The trend was the same at the *Washington Post*, which used 28 percent opposition and 18 percent government sources. Only the conservative *Washington Times* relied about equally on sources from the anti-apartheid opposition and the South African government (21% vs. 20% respectively).



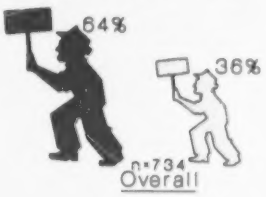
Sources

The media are frequently criticized for covering foreign affairs from an American perspective, and for relying primarily on government sources. Neither of these criticisms proved valid for the South Africa story. First, more than three out of four sources quoted (76 %) were South African. Only one source in eleven (9%) came from the United States. Second, the media relied on the anti-apartheid opposition for information half again as often as government sources within South Africa. The opposition accounted for 28 percent of all sources compared to only 18 percent for the government. Prominent opposition voices in-

Topics

News coverage of South Africa was driven by efforts to end or reform the system of apartheid. The coverage focused mainly on the anti-apartheid movement. The largest number of stories, 400 in all, dealt with the actions, statements, or background of anti-apartheid leaders or organizations. By contrast, all discussion of government policy together totalled only 304 stories. Another major element of the story was social unrest associated with the apartheid debate. More than 200 stories dealt with the demonstrations, protests, and riots against the government and its policies. Another 143 stories focused on police actions in response to

racial protest and unrest. Television's well-known preference for action over explanation was evident in its coverage. The networks devoted half again as many stories to demonstrations and riots as did the newspapers (125 vs. 78). By contrast, the print outlets devoted nearly three times as much coverage as television did to explaining the background and context of the current debate.



	ABC	CBS	NBC	*Washington Post*	*Washington Times*
Police Violence	44	44	67	101	101
Demonstrator Violence	11	16	9	54	26

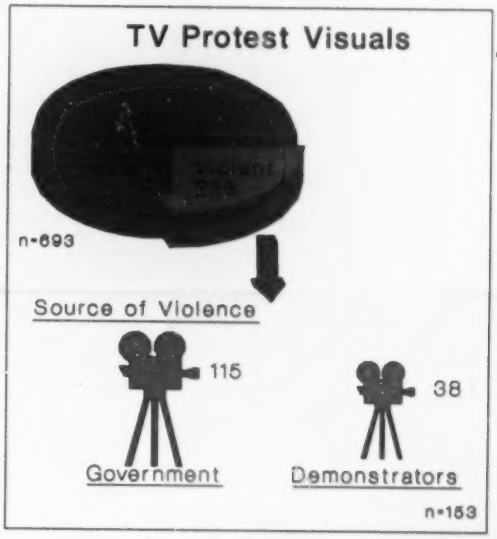
Based on number of mentions.

Police vs. Protesters

The coverage drew heavily on the dynamic of protest and police response, especially the violence committed by both sides. We coded 734 mentions of protests or government reactions. Nearly two-thirds of these (64%) concerned violent behavior such as the police use of whips, tear gas, and attack dogs or demonstrators burning barricades and looting. News organizations differed sharply in the attention they devoted to violence committed by the police and the demonstrators respectively.

Among the television networks, NBC aired by far the most reports of police violence (67) and the fewest reports of violence by demonstrators (9). By contrast, CBS and ABC each reported 44 violent acts by police. CBS mentioned violence by protesters 16 times, ABC 11 times. NBC was also the only outlet to report non-violent protest more frequently than violent protest (23 vs. 9 mentions). All other outlets reported violent actions by both police and demonstrators more frequently than non-violent actions. At the newspapers, the *Washington Post* and *Washington Times* each reported the same number of violent actions by police (101). Surprisingly, however, the more liberal *Post* reported violence by demonstrators twice as often as the conservative *Times* (54 vs. 26).

Thus, NBC's audience heard reports of police violence mentioned more than seven times as often as reports of violence by protestors. At ABC, the ratio was four to one, at CBS three to one. The *Washington Times* reported on police violence 4 times as often as protestor violence, while the ratio at the *Washington Post* was only two to one.

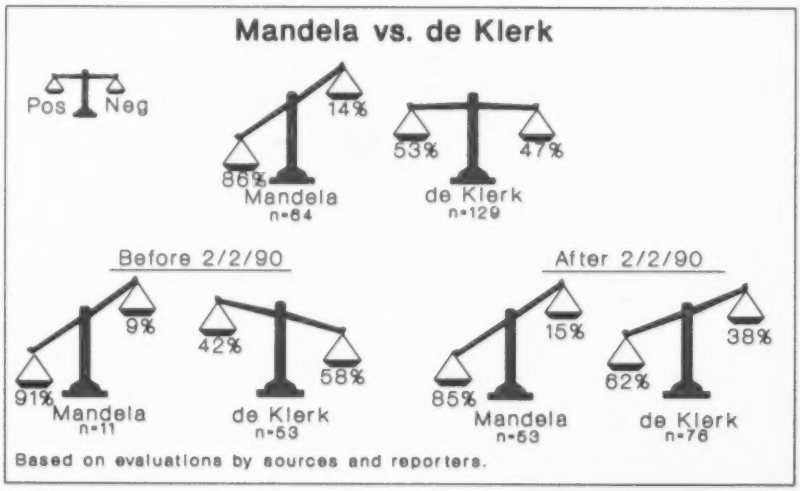


Video Violence

Television's reports of protest and violence are visual as well as verbal. Indeed, pictures of violence may be the medium's most distinctive and emotionally compelling feature. Recognizing this, the South African government ordered police to remove reporters before dispersing protesters. Therefore, television frequently showed scenes of peaceful protest followed by reporters describing off-screen violence. Four out of five scenes of protest shown were non-violent. Despite these restrictions, the networks showed 153 scenes of violence. Of these,three out of four showed such police behavior as the use of whips and attack dogs to quell crowds. The remaining violent scenes showed protesters burning barricades, looting, or throwing stones. (Five visuals showed violence on both sides; these were not included in the above figures.) Overall, the preponderance of police violence over protester violence was slightly greater in verbal than in visual depictions on television.

Mandela vs. de Klerk

Nelson Mandela received mostly accolades on American television, while F.W. de Klerk's media image was a mixed bag, despite his effort to reform the apartheid system. Overall, Mandela received 55 positive evaluations from sources and reporters, compared to only nine negative evaluations during the nine month study, for an overall 86 percent positive rating. For example, the *Washington Post* quoted the Rev. Allan Boesak, "He is a statesman. He is a man of real intelligence, a great political strategist, but also a very genial man, thoughtful and composed." (2/11/90) By contrast, de Klerk attracted balanced coverage, comprised of 69 positive and 60 negative judgments (53% positive). For example, ABC aired a white South African who berated de Klerk for his reforms, "He's selling everyone out, not just the white nation. He's gone bananas. Nobody is going to benefit from this except maybe the radicals and the communists." (2/5/90)



On the all-important television networks, Mandela gained a five to one positive ratio (84% positive), compared to almost two to one negative for the South African president (36% positive). Mandela fared even better in the *Washington Post*, which gave him a 100 percent positive rating -- not a single criticism printed during the nine month study. De Klerk also fared somewhat better in the *Post*, with a 53 percent positive rating. Only the *Washington Times* presented similar levels of good press for both men -- 67 percent positive for Mandela and 63 percent positive for de Klerk.

Despite suffering by comparison with Mandela, de Klerk's media image improved substantially following his legalization of the African National Congress in February. His proportion of good press jumped from only 42 percent prior to his announcement of this and other reforms, to 62 percent thereafter. De Klerk's action also set the stage for Mandela's release from prison. The change in Mandela's legal status produced little change in his media image. The slight drop overall (from 91 to 85% positive) was due to a falling approval rating in the *Washington Times*, from 100 percent positive prior to February to only 60 percent thereafter.

Rating the Issues

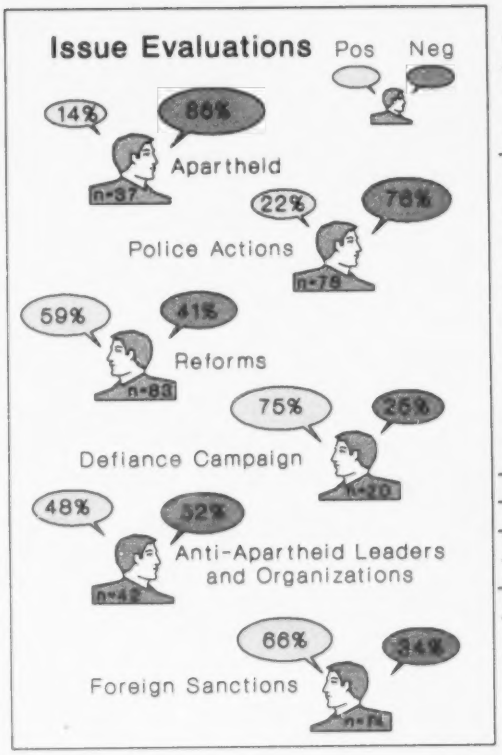
The apartheid system of racial inequality is the centerpiece of the crisis in South Africa. An overwhelming 86 percent of all sources rejected apartheid. Sample criticism: "Every South African has been defrauded by apartheid. Every family faces creeping poverty. Enough is enough." (South African Democratic Party Manifesto, *Washington Times*, 7/29/89). Another focus of debate was the actions of the police as they attempted to deal with the protest movement and enforce apartheid law. Their activities were received only slightly better than the apartheid system. More than three out of four sources criticized the police. A typical evaluation came from a South African policeman of "mixed race," "They were just hitting people. They couldn't care if they were innocent bystanders or not. They were running after them even when they were fleeing, hitting them. It seemed to me that they were enjoying themselves, feasting on the people." (*Washington Times* 9/7/89).

By contrast, the political reforms proposed and implemented by the de Klerk government, such as allowing peaceful demonstrations and releasing Mandela from prison, were praised by nearly three out of five sources (59%). Television gave the reforms their highest ratings, at 67 percent positive. For example, on ABC a white South African responded to Mandela's release, "it's

the greatest thing to ever happen to South Africa... let's hope that this country will go forward in great strides." (2/11/90). The positive reaction to reform was slightly more muted in the *Washington Post,* gaining approval from 58 percent of sources. But the *Washington Times* dissented from the national media consensus by printing nearly twice as much criticism as support for de Klerk's reforms, a 64 percent negative rating.

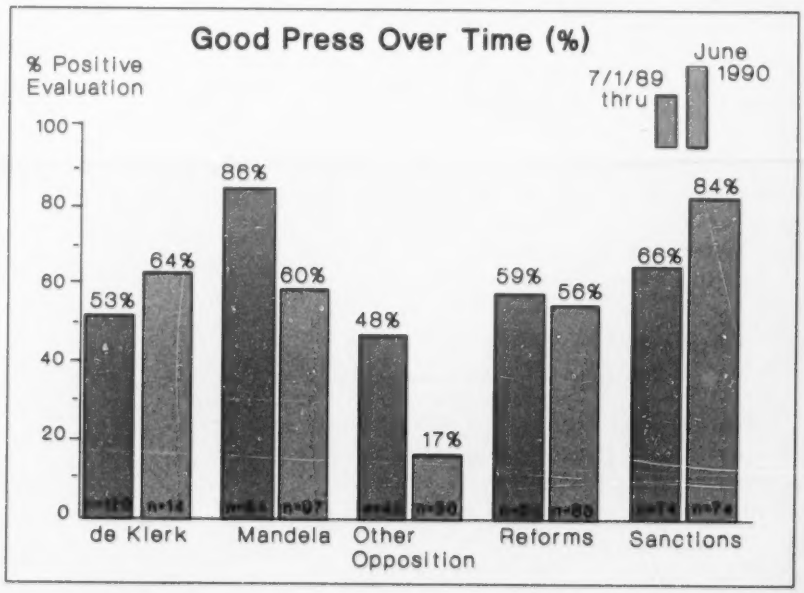
The actions of the anti-apartheid opposition were a major focus of the media's issue debate. The opposition's chief tactic, the defiance campaign, was praised by three out of four sources. Apart from Mandela, opposition leaders and organizations did not fare as well. Fewer than half the sources (48%) supported such leaders as Archbishop Desmond Tutu and organizations like the ANC.

Finally, the economic sanctions imposed against South Africa by most of the world community received the most evaluations (74) of any issue. Two out of three sources supported foreign sanctions. Both the networks and the *Washington Post* displayed mainly approval (78% and 69% positive ratings respectively). For example, CBS quoted Senator Edward Kennedy (D-MA), "Sanctions have proved their value in helping to bring the regime to the brink of meaningful negotiations. To insure good faith and further progress the sanctions should be maintained in full force." (2/2/90). Once again, however, the *Washington Times* provided a dissenting voice. The *Times* panned the policy of economic sanctions, giving them negative press by a four to three margin (56% to 44%).



South Africa during June 1990. The news diverged from previous patterns in several key areas. Heavy attention to Mandela's U.S. visit caused a dramatic jump in coverage. Discussions of the man and his policies became the central focus of South Africa news. From July 1989 through the end of March 1990 Mandela was evaluated by 64 sources. During June 1990 alone, this number rose to 97. Enthusiasm for the man remained high but was mixed with rejections of Mandela's support for Yasir Arafat, Fidel Castro, and Moammar Gadhafi. As a result, Mandela's approval rating dropped to only 52 percent of sources on television and 36 percent in the *Washington Times.* The *Washington Post* continued to serve as Mandela's staunchest source of support, giving him 85 percent positive evaluations to go with his 100 percent approval rating in our earlier study.

Typical of the adulation that accompanied Mandela's visit was the praise of New York Governor Mario Cuomo, who called him "a symbol of the indestructibility of the human spirit." (NBC 6/20/90) But naysayers also found their way onto the airwaves. Congressman William Dannemeyer (R-CA) charged, "Nelson Mandela's appearance before this



Mandela Mania?

To gauge the effect Nelson Mandela's U.S. and World Tour had on the American media, we also analyzed news coverage of

body (Congress) is a national disgrace. The invitation alone heaps shame on this body." (CBS 6/25/90) Other leaders and organizations of the South African opposition also fared poorly in June, receiving 83 percent negative assessments. Most of the criticism concerned the ANC's connection with the South African Communist Party.

As Mandela moved to center stage, de Klerk was relegated to the sidelines. He received a positive approval rating of 64 percent, but this was based on only 14 evaluations, compared to 129 in our previous nine month study. For the media, this was Mandela's moment, and it was not to be shared by his main adversary.

The premiere issue of South African news in June was foreign sanctions. In fact the stated purpose of the Mandela tour was to pressure foreign governments to keep up the economic sanctions. The 74 assessments on this issue equalled the total we recorded during the entire previous study. Advocates of sanctions outweighed detractors by more than a five to one margin (84%). That represents a substantial boost from the already high 66 percent approval rating during the earlier period studied. Support was virtually unanimous (94% positive) at the networks and the *Post.* Even at the *Times,* where a majority of sources had previously opposed sanctions, two out of three now backed them. This illustrates the positive aura surrounding Mandela's visit, perhaps even more than his personal ratings.

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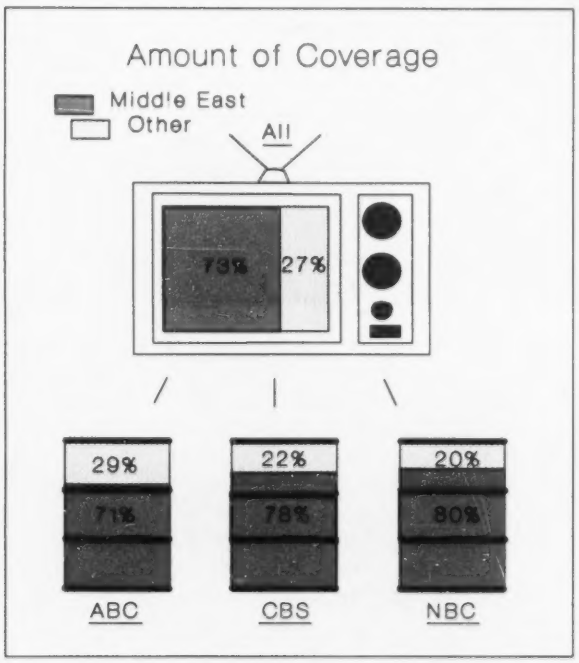
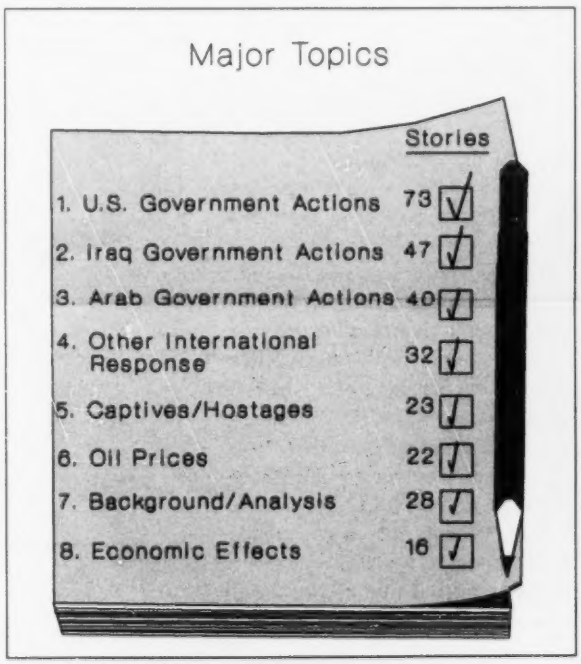
The Guns of August

TV News Coverage of the Middle East Crisis: Week 1 (August 2 to 8)





Note: The television network evening newscasts aired 185 reports on the Middle East crisis and 70 reports on all other stories from August 2 to August 8. More than one topic could be listed per story.

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Gulf Crisis Update
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Media Monitor

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Volume IV Number 8 October 1990

Bush's War on Drugs

Covering the Continuing Debate Over Drug Abuse

How have the media covered George Bush's war on drugs? To find out we analyzed 790 stories on the drug problem from TV network newscasts and the *Washington Post* from September 1989 (following Bush's televised anti-drug speech) through June 1990. We compared the results to coverage of the Reagan administration's drug war during 1988. This month's *Media Monitor* also analyzes the massive TV news coverage of the Persian Gulf crisis during August.

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Editors:
Dr. S. Robert Lichter
Dr. Linda S. Lichter

Research Director:
Dan Amundson

Project Directors:
Tim McLaughlin
Richard Noyes

Research Assistants
Colin Stephens, Rob Dowling, Carl Lichvarcik, Michael Dolan Chris Blanchard

Production and Graphics
Mary Carroll Gunning
Allison Schaengold

Public Affairs Director:
Toni Mann

***

Major findings:

- **A Black Problem?** - Blacks were pictured far more often than whites in TV news "visuals" on the drug problem. *Page 4*

- **Anti-war News** - Judgments of the war against drugs ran 2 to 1 negative. Bush's own performance rated even worse: 3 to 1 negative. *Page 3*

- **All or Nothing** - Legalization got better press than zero tolerance policies. *Page 3*

- En-Gulfing the News - The Gulf crisis took up 84% of the TV news agenda in August - 872 stories and more than 25 hours of airtime on the ABC, CBS, and NBC evening newscasts. *Page 5*

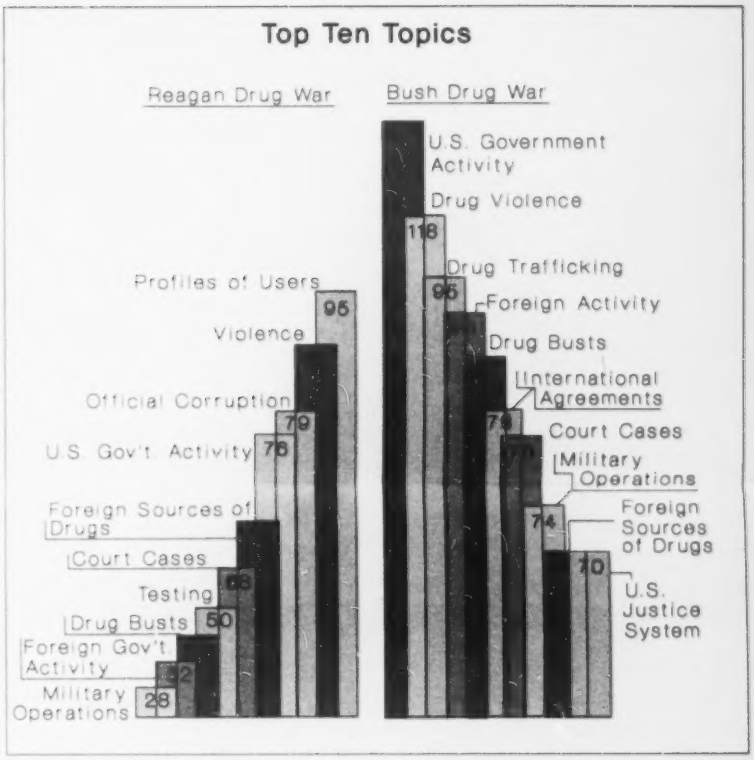
- Boosting Bush - The crisis boosted Bush's good press and visibility. But a majority of sources criticized U.S. policies in the Gulf. *Page 5*

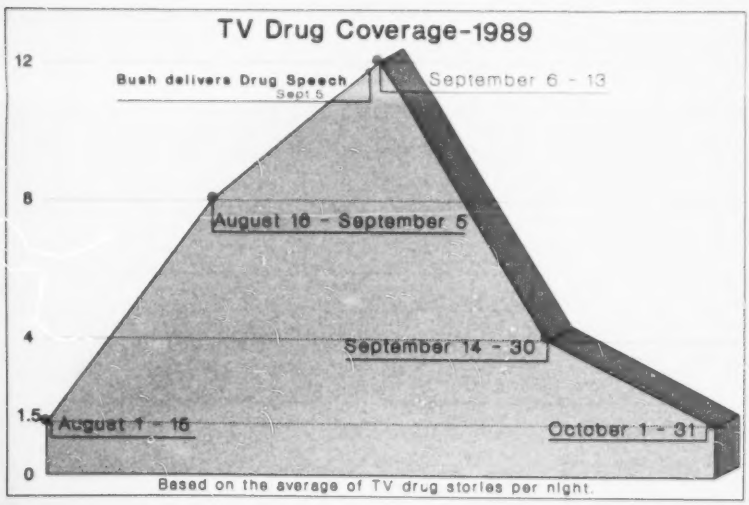
- Humor Update - Boom in Saddam jokes. *Page 6*

Drug Watch

We monitored media coverage of the national drug problem for the ten months following President Bush's televised declaration of a war on drugs on September 5, 1989. We compared the results to media coverage of the Reagan administration's drug war from January through October 1988. (See *Media Monitor* January 1989) From September 1989 through June 1990, the drug problem was the topic of 483 stories on the evening newscasts (179 on NBC, 167 on ABC, 137 on CBS) with a combined air time of 14 hours 42 minutes. *The Washington Post* added 307 stories representing over 5000 column inches of text. The networks devoted nearly twice as much air time to the subject after Bush declared "war" on drugs as they did during a comparable period under Reagan in 1988 (14 hours 42 minutes vs. 7 hours 25 minutes)

To illustrate Bush's success in putting the drug issue on the agenda, we examined network evening news coverage of drugs before and after his heavily publicized speech to a national TV audience. Before Bush's speech was announced, the networks were averaging a nightly total of fewer than two stories on drugs. After the announcement the nightly total jumped to eight, and after the speech itself to twelve - an eightfold increase in coverage. Once the hoopla faded, so did the coverage. A month after Bush's speech, it had returned to its previous level, under two stories per night.





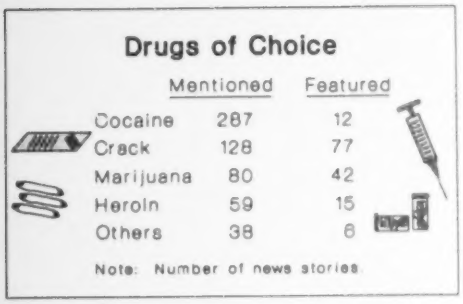
The Line on Drugs

Apart from administration initiatives, the coverage was driven by events such as the arrest and trial of Washington, D.C. mayor Marion Barry for cocaine use, a summit with leaders of drug-producing nations and, above all, the struggle against international drug trafficking. Efforts to combat Colombian narcotraffickers (whom Dan Rather labeled "drug thugs") became the hub of the coverage, around which other stories revolved. Thus, the focus of drug news has shifted sharply since 1988, with U.S. government initiatives rising to the top of the news agenda. Among the major topics of 1988 that became also rans in 1990, were profiles of drug users, stories on official corruption, and the controversy over drug testing.

The administration's efforts and the news agenda both focused on cocaine. This drug and its derivative "crack" were mentioned in over 400 stories, more than five times as often as any

Media Monitor

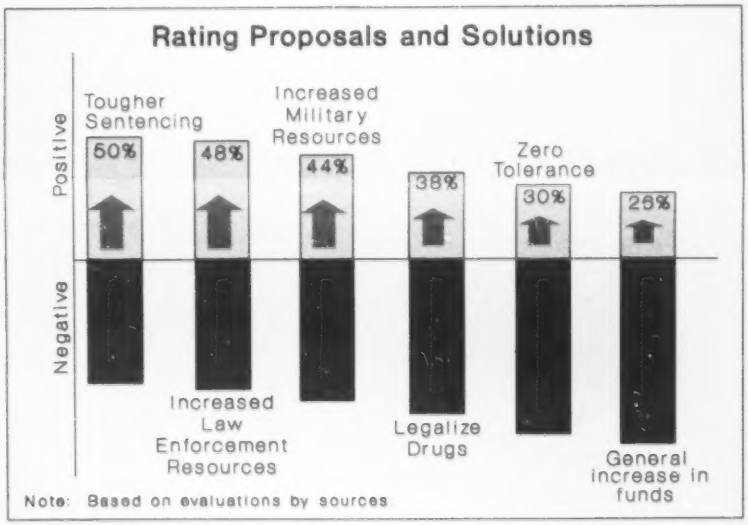
other illegal drug. In-depth discussions of particular drugs usually focused on crack (77 stories), then on marijuana (42), and heroin (15), with other forms of cocaine lagging far behind



at twelve stories. Latin America accounted for 89 percent of all mentions of the geographic origin of illicit drugs. Colombia alone was mentioned 188 times, as often as all other nations combined.

Policy Options

The proposals debated most frequently in the media concerned tougher sentencing for drug abusers, increased roles for law enforcement agencies and the military, and legalization of drugs. Detractors outweighed advocates, as none of these solutions received a majority of support from sources cited. Tougher sentencing fared best, with praise and criticism evenly balanced. One drug expert endorsed the plan: "If you raise the cost of doing the drugs so that it outweighs what (casual users) see as the perceived benefit, then you'll stop the behavior." (NBC, 9/5/89). Increased resources for law enforcement and military activities received somewhat less support (48 percent and 44 percent positive comments respectively).



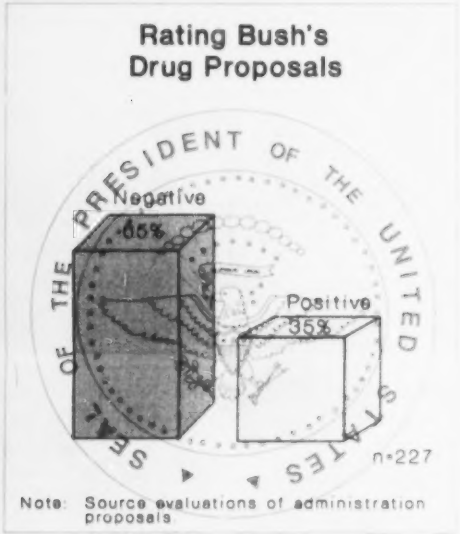
For instance, a Chicago public defender opposed incarceration: "That is the quick fix - to lock people up. But...it seems to me that it makes the problem worse." (CBS, 6/19/90)

Neither of the two extremes of the policy debate were favored frequently. But support for legalization of drugs outpaced praise for a "zero tolerance" policy by 38 percent to 30 percent positive ratings. For example, CBS (12/13/89) quoted a federal judge who argued in favor of legalizing drugs, "There is no evidence that prohibition has or will break this vicious cycle of dependence." However, rejections of legalization produced some of the most strongly stated evaluations. Thus, Virginia governor Douglas Wilder declared that legalizing such a "pernicious evil" would be "preposterous" and "cowardly". (*Washington Post*, 4/17/90)

Losing the Drug War

Although the Bush administration was able to put the drug issue on the media agenda, it could not ensure favorable opinions of its proposals. Thus, criticisms of administration proposals outnumbered praise by nearly a two to one margin (65 percent to 35 percent). For example, in a January 12 broadcast on ABC, Colombia's foreign minister objected to the planned use of U.S. warships to patrol the Colombian coast, saying this "would infringe on Colombian sovereignty," and the U.S. should "send the ships to patrol its own coastline." ABC carried the most criticism of administration proposals. Three out of four sources on ABC were negative (only 24 percent positive), compared to a two to one negative margin on NBC (33 percent positive) and evenly balanced coverage on CBS (50 percent positive). *The Washing-*

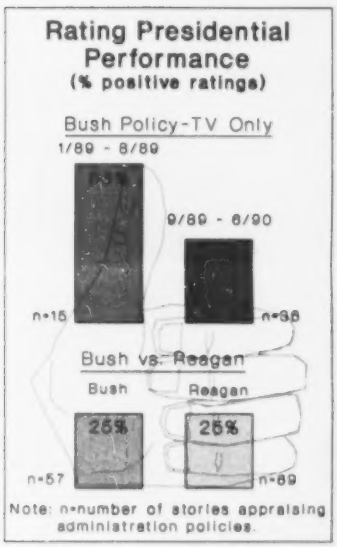
ton Post was about as critical as the networks, with sources splitting 64 percent negative to 36 percent positive.

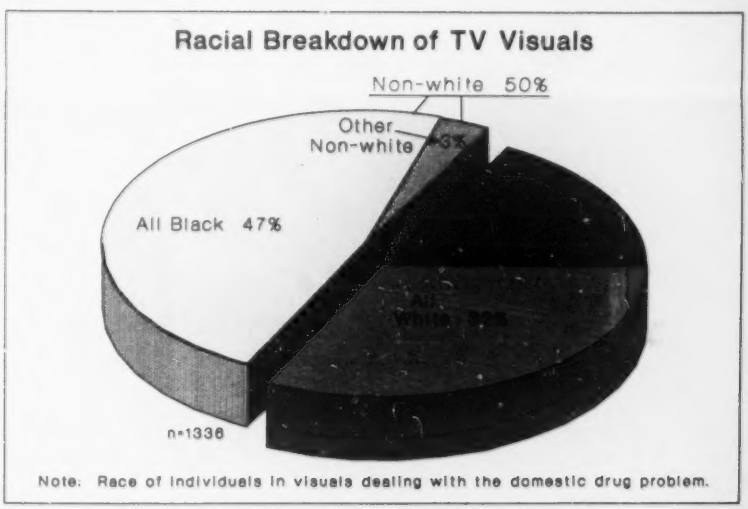


The administration's performance in its war on drugs was rated even more negatively than its proposals. In fact Bush, like Reagan before him, suffered three times as much criticism as praise for his personal performance on this issue. Thus, the *Post* (4/25) quoted New York mayor David Dinkins' charge that "national policy remains...rooted in austerity and mired in inaction." Ironically, before Bush's declaration of war, source assessments of his performance on the drug issue were running slightly positive, by 53 percent to 47 percent. His drug speech, by targeting this issue as a major administration initiative, also targeted Bush for criticism in the media. Since the speech, his proportion of approval on TV news has dropped by almost half - to only 28 percent positive assessments of his role in fighting drugs.

Visuals

Television news consists of pictures as well as words. And not everyone likes what they see of television's drug coverage. Some civil rights groups have charged that network coverage of drug abuse has focused unfairly on blacks. To evaluate this charge, we analyzed the racial distribution of individuals shown in contexts associated with drug use on TV news. People are rarely shown actually using illegal drugs on television. But our sample contained 1,336 "visuals" (camera shots) depicting the human side of the domestic drug problem. These included shots of alleged crack houses, neighborhoods where drug sales or use were alleged to be prevalent, etc. In such contexts, blacks were visually associated with drugs more frequently than were whites. In half of the relevant visuals, only non-whites were shown, most of whom were black. Another 17 percent of visuals showed a mixture of whites and non-whites. Only 32 percent of the drug-related visuals showed only whites. We also found substantial variation among the networks. NBC pictured whites almost as frequently as blacks, by 38 percent to 41 percent. By contrast, 53 percent of ABC's visuals showed only blacks, compared to 29 percent showing only whites. At CBS, 49 percent of the visuals showed only blacks and 28 percent showed only whites.

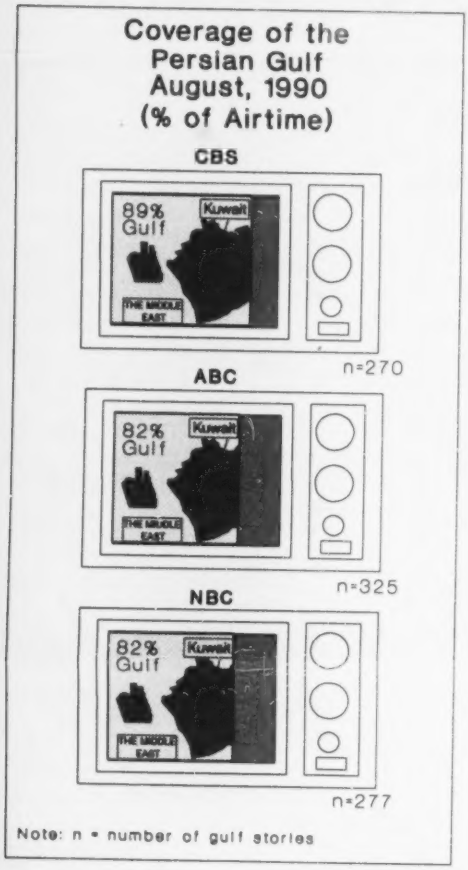



Racial Breakdown of TV Visuals
Non-white 50%
Other Non-white 3%
All Black 47%
n=1336
Note: Race of individuals in visuals dealing with the domestic drug problem.

The Guns of August
Television News Coverage of the Persian Gulf Crisis

Crisis Coverage

Eighty-four percent of TV nightly news airtime was devoted to the Persian Gulf crisis in August. The crisis generated 872 stories on the network evening news shows, representing a staggering 25 hours 8 minutes of coverage. CBS spent the most time on the Gulf story - 8 hours 55 minutes of airtime, compared to 8 hours 23 minutes on ABC, and 7 hours 50 minutes on NBC. As a result, other stories that had been getting heavy coverage this summer (the savings & loan scandal, South Africa, and the Soviet Union) almost disappeared from the airwaves in August. Before the Gulf crisis, for example, the Soviet Union was averaging more than 150 stories per month during 1990. In contrast, August saw only 14 TV news stories on the U.S.S.R. which were not Gulf-related.



Saddam is in the Mussolini / Hitler category.

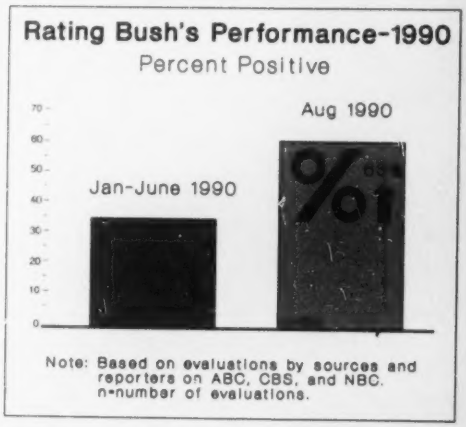
-Middle East expert
NBC, 8/2/90

Saddam Hussein to the Arabs...is like Ronald Reagan is to Americans.

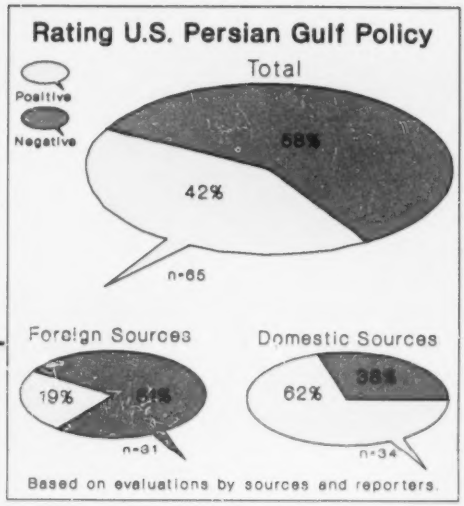
-"man on the street"
Amman, Jordon
CBS, 8/6/90

Among the 87 evening newscasts that aired from August 2 through August 31, 86 led with the Gulf crisis. (On August 5 ABC led with the dispatch of U.S. Marines to Liberia.) The U.S. defense commitment to the Gulf, i.e., the deployment of troops, the harsh conditions facing soldiers in the desert, etc., received the most attention, and was featured in 176 stories. The hostages also received substantial notice: 134 stories--one out of every six Gulf stories--were devoted to their plight. Oil prices and other economic consequences of the crisis were featured in 55 stories, or about six percent of the coverage.

Despite the lack of access, 260 field reports originated from the Middle East. Most were filed from Jordan (97), with 53 coming from formerly cloistered Saudi Arabia, and 37 coming from Egypt. A remarkable 36 reports were filed from Iraq itself, as U.S. reporters were ushered in and out during the early weeks of the crisis. The crisis greatly heightened the visibility of CBS anchor Dan Rather. Rather's 57 stories made him the most frequently on-air reporter during August, as he reported from such diverse locales as Cairo, Baghdad, Amman, and the deck of the U.S.S. Independence. Other high-profile correspondents included



NBC weekend anchor Garrick Utley, with 28 stories, closely follwed by NBC's White House reporter John Cochran, and CBS's Pentagon reporter David Martin, who each filed 27 stories. CBS's Bob Simon rounded out the top five, with 23 stories from the Middle East.



Bush's Second Honeymoon

The Persian Gulf tension brought good press for President Bush. He had been mired at a 38 percent level of good press in network news coverage during the first six months of 1990. In August, praise for the President soared, as 63 percent of all sources who expressed an opinion supported him. That made August Bush's best news month since his triumphal return from Eastern Europe in July 1989. In addition, he received substantially more attention in August than he had previously this year. During the first half of 1990, Bush was the focus of an average of 74 TV news stories per month. In August, he was featured in 126 stories.

The President received support across the board from domestic sources, with reporters themselves providing seventeen statements of praise and only one of criticism. Only among foreign sources did criticism exceed praise. Typical of the praise for Bush's actions was the comment of an American held in Baghdad, who asked ABC's Ted Koppel to "tell the President of the United States that we think he's doing the right thing." (ABC 8/15) Toward the end of the month, however, Bush's prolonged vacation in Maine drew some barbs. For example, the wife of a hostage declared on CBS that Bush "needs to stay off the golf course, out of the water fishing, and be back at where he's supposed to be and acting like he cares." (CBS 8/19)

However, the administration's Persian Gulf policies rated more criticism than did Bush personally. Nearly three out of five evaluations (58 percent) faulted U.S. policies in the Persian Gulf. Foreign sources (mainly Iraqis, Jordanians, and other Arabs) were highly critical, with 81 percent negative evaluations. Domestic sources, by contrast, were mainly supportive, by 62 percent to 38 percent. For example, Admiral William Crowe argued that Defense Secretary Cheney's visit to Saudi Arabia "improves and widens the President's military options." (ABC 8/7) On the other hand, a Jordanian scholar asserted that the American effort in the Gulf was counterproductive, adding that "there must be some good in the man [Saddam Hussein] if the Americans and the Israelis are so much against him." (ABC 8/6)

The Joke's On Saddam

Saddam Hussein quickly replaced George Bush and Dan Quayle as the favorite target of late-night TV show monologues. Sample jokes: "The first time I saw a picture of Saddam I thought, 'Hey, finally Noriega's done something about his skin.'" (Leno, 8/21); "Actually,... he plays an important role in the Middle East. He makes Qaddafi look sane." (Leno, 8/9); and responding to the Iraqi ambassador's claim that the American hostages were "guests," Arsenio Hall replied "Well excuse me, Mr. Ambassador, our guests are ready to check out." (8/22)

Top Ten Joke Targets*
August 1 - Sept 15

1)	Saddam Hussein	49
2)	Dan Quayle	21
2)	Marion Barry	21
4)	George Bush	20
5)	David Souter	13
6)	Emir of Kuwait	11
7)	Muammar Qadaffi	10
8)	Ayatollah Khomeini	4
8)	Michael Dukakis	4
8)	Ronald Reagan	4

*Jokes from TV talk show monologues by Johnny Carson, Jay Leno, David Letterman, and Arsenio Hall.